

The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 12.36



You claim I'm your flesh

*After eighteen years, you walked outta my life
Put it like this*

*You walked outta my mom's life when I was in her womb
After so long, you claim me as your flesh
A couple months after my mom was pregnant from you
You still walked away like the chavala that you are*

read the rest of Vaga's POW on page 5

My Cell

*Closing in on me
making it hard to breathe
days are getting much longer
time's not going faster
now I'm screaming
trying to fight it
i daze out my window as i strain with hope
with the thought of you riding up the dead wooded hill
I hide in the darkest corner of the shadows
for she is holding me back
tell her to release, to let go of me!
she is making me wilt
like a dying rose turning stone in the winter
like a frozen rose longing for the touch of the sun
she's sucking the life out of me as if she were the Grimm
come be my superhero, my champion, my knight in
shining armor
hence forth and draw thy sword
take the path thru the Fire Bushes filled with awaiting
thorns
while on next she awaits with her horns and tail
with her fire breath, her wings, and all of her sharp scales
she's got the teeth to eat you alive and grind your bones
to dust
but save me, please, you must!
pierce thy sword into the black hole where her heart once
lie
cross the forsaken bridge, climb high towards the Heavens
and lying on needles, helpless in shackles,
this be where i await you, for all time to come
you've come this far, don't turn back now
pry me from this mangled hatred
mount me to thy steed
lets ride off into the sunset, to await what is to be
this would be a dream come true, a dream i truly need.*
-Cheyenne Daniels

Hey Beat editorial note readers, it's not like all the time we receive pieces via email, but we do, such as the poem you just read from Miss Cheyenne Daniels, who sent this email contribution early this year. One reason we are sharing this with you is because we are not too sure if we published it already or not, plus it gives us good reason to speak about this other channel aka the email and website world that we also utilize. With that said, we encourage any of you readers who one day stumble upon our website to send us a note, a thought, a piece to share with the true Beat community and that is those readers who only have access to the hardcopy, given their current predicament with incarceration.

Well, after reading the poem, "My Cell," we too wanted to know more about who this person is and how and why she felt the desire to reach out to us. Well, after several exchanges she gave us permission to share her work with you, so take it in and get a better understanding who Cheyenne is.

"My dad was the one who found The Beat and sent me a link to it to check it out. I've been writing since I was little, so when he finds things that have to do with writing that he finds interesting he will send them to me. I feel overjoyed and very excited with the thought of one of my pieces being published. But I don't understand the process and the information about having a piece published, could you please explain it to me?"

When I wrote "My Cell" I was in the Youth Shelter at the time. I was having disputes at home and felt that in my mind that sooner or later I was going to be a threat to my mom. So before things got out of hand I signed myself into the Youth Shelter. So, that's basically what inspired my piece. It's all about symbolism that defines the situation.

I was only in the Youth Shelter for 2 weeks but it felt like forever, only because I could not see my friends or the guy I was sort of seeing at the time. My mom is the dragon who keeps me imprisoned and locked up and who makes me feel those awful things. It tells also how I feel about her as well. Then I thought of how in a way it's like a fairy tale. So my knight in shining armor is the guy I was sort

of seeing and I was basically telling him the way to go to get me out of my rut of misery. So yeah I guess that basically explains it.

Things are going better now, I just don't talk as much at home to avoid confrontation. Thanks."

As with every email we receive, we appreciate the thoughts and insights, such as Cheyenne's, that come from you emailers as much as we appreciate every contribution we receive in our weekly writing workshops and in the snail mail world from you all throughout this great land of ours!

As most of you know we have been around for a long time! Twelve years of this amazing yet relentless work - too cool!

As a non-profit we do not have the funds to pay any writers or artists, but if by chance a piece is picked up from us and we are given money for that particular piece we turn the money over to you the writer/artist who created the piece.

For your information not every piece is featured on The Beat Within website <www.thebeatwithin.org>, we only include selected pieces from The BWO (Beat WithOut) and the POWs (Pieces Of the Week), though most pieces definitely make it in our weekly publication/hardcopy that is distributed throughout the country, primarily up and down California, going inside numerous correctional facilities, group homes, shelters, prisons, schools, homes etc.

With that said, If any of you want to continue submitting or begin sending us pieces/poems upon leaving the institution you reside in that's obviously your choice, but for your information our door is forever open to you all.

OK, lets get to the topics at hand for this fabulous 12.36 issue... The first topic, "Using your time" - How can you use your time while incarcerated to make sure you that you don't come back? Some people choose to spend all their time in the cell sleeping; some work out; some read. Some people spend their recreation time just watching TV; some just talk; some write, and some play games. What do you do — or what can you do — to use your time wisely to better yourself and to grow so that you never have to return to incarceration?

Our second topic, "Stranded"— This week we are interested in hearing from you about a time in your life you felt stranded. Have you ever been in a position where you were felt you were in a strange place without knowing how to get out? What did you do (or what are doing) to get back on track? Was it dangerous? Was it stressful? Did it feel like you were left hangin' in a bad position? What did you do? Tell The Beat a story of a time you were stranded.

The third topic, "Tribute To A Helpful Counselor" - We often hear how the people that work for the system are playing you, so we know all about that. This week, we're interested in a different kind of person... those who work for the system that have actually helped you. This is your chance to pay tribute to a counselor, PO, lawyer or judge who has helped you out, and to whom you feel grateful. We know they're out there...

"The best book I ever read" - What's the best book you ever read? When did you read it and why? What made it so good? Did it teach you anything, or help you get through some troubled times, or was it just for your entertainment? Give us as many details as you can about this book and why it meant something to you.

Knowing the topics, allow us now to open the door for the main attraction, the writers of The Beat Within to tell it as they see it!

OK editorial note readers, this one goes out the great typists of The Beat who set the stage for us editors to dive in and clean up the pieces and respond accordingly before going to layout. Believe us, we do not have many great typist right now, but two come to mind, and with that said, both were former Beat contributors in the hall and both are now living in the free world handling their business. Props to Al Bo and Monica Carlos for their incredibly great work ethic. Thanks colleagues!

See you next week Beat readers!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Will Roy

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jill Wolfson, Allan Tinker, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Omar Turcios, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Jennifer Clarke, Brittany Bernard, Perry Jones, Tal Ariel, Margo Ariel Brockman, Catalina Hayes-Bautista, Elizabeth Crawford, Morghan Velez Young, Siliva Mortenson, Neela Banerjee and Caitlin Urie.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecowski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Tammie Utter, Shannon Lechner, D. Scott Herrmann, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Bernalillo County, New Mexico "The Land of Enchantment" Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Steve Serna

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillo County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Let Me Tell All

This is how my life started when I was youngster; I had a mom, dad, and gra'ma who was there through thick and thin.

My dad is an ass, no but, he would get pissed off about the little things.

I was a little vato so I would take an ass whooping once in a while, 'till one day I took an ass beating from hell, and I never was a snitch since I was a little youngster.

I came back home from my pop's house 'cause I was to go over there on weekend's and I got to the main crib where my mom and gran'ma stayed and I walked in.

I still remember the look on my mom's face 'cause my pop's push my face in the ground and broke two ribs and my face was jacked up.

My mom called all of my uncles, I have ten uncles and they went over there. I went with them and my pop's ain't no bitch, so he was tellin' all my uncles "lets get it...!"

My mom was tellin' them, "no lets just go!"

My mom told him, "look what you did to my son ! You hurt him." She said it more to hurt him with words then anything.

He said "ef you" to my mom and me, then spit in my face, and said "you're a disgrace to my name," and for me to change it.

We just left, so I still remember what happen and now when I fight or drink I always think about that shhh.

So now all I'm trying to tell you all is don't let it get you down just keep moving on.

-Steve, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's too bad your father had to do this to you, but on the other hand it may have been your blessing in disguise. It was not good that your mother had all your uncles go over there, but then again it was good that she prevented anything from happening. If the future don't take the law into your own hands, call the police and let them take care of it. It's not worth having your freedom taken away from you.

God Brings Down An Angel

When I was six months old my moms was not able to take care of me and pops you all know how that is. Moms was on drugs, that was her hobby, so she didn't have time to take care of a ninja. All she wanted to do was get high. As for pops, he wasn't man enough to take care of his responsibility so he ran off as most punk ninjas do: run and hide.

So here I'm seven years old with no mamma, no daddy, so what that makes me a foster child/crack baby. But God always want everybody to have a chance, so he brings down an angel: My uncle.

My uncle he's a good man, he took me under his wing. He didn't have to but he did. That's the person I admire to the fullest. He seen somethin' in me the first day he got me, and he still do to this day. And here I am in Juvenile Hall locked up from the goals I could of made. I know my uncle still see something in me that I don't see. That's why he still wit' me. He don't gotta be, I'm 18 now, considered a grown man in society.

He did his share, which was dealin' with me until I was 18, now he can give a ninja the boot, if he really want to. I now it's a lotta mo' people going through the same thang: What I'm really tryin' to say is we better wake up and smell the coffee 'cause soon it's gon' be gone, and then you on yo' own.

-Corey, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, what a powerful story. Your uncle must have seen the good in you and decided to do his best to help that part of you grow strong. And as you just discovered, there's no expiration date on love. He's not going to stop loving you because of a birthday. But the law does, that's for sure - so like you said it's time to make that change!

Thank You For Abandoning Me!

I been stranded multiple times in my life since before I was old enough to know myself. As a matter of a fact I've been stranded before I even existed. My pops left me in this world to learn the game without a coach. Throughout my whole life, the ninja has been in out, in and out. It's like he left me to adopt " that hard rock."

I had to be older than I really am. Since 11 years old, I was the only male figure in my household. The youngest of two, I have a older sister and my mom. I was the one who had to protect my two ladies. I had to learn how to be a young man from a woman as well as on my own. To be honest, I know there's things my mom can't give me to help me become a man, but I really think she has done a better job than any male could have ever done, including my father.

By me being stranded, by pops has forced me to develop and mature at a young age. I thank my pops for abandoning me because I've grown and learned things about life that most don't know unless they can relate. I took advantage of his absences. I consider myself to be intelligently insane. I love knowledge. I love going from not knowing to knowing, and I thank my pop for that, because I guess I got my curiosity from wondering why he does what he does, and what can make a person leave his two blessings (children).

The worst time he abandoned me was when I was 11, he left permanently. My pops asked me to use my key to the house so he could wash his clothes. Then I seen him hanging out the window of the bus later on that day. This square-ass ninja threw my keys off the bus and said, "I see you in a minute my young nigga." I didn't see him for two years after that. We ain't been coo' ever since. I hate 'im, but I still love 'im though!

-Payne, San Francisco

From The Beat: You bring a real power through your words — power that lets us understand both your hate and your love for the man that abandoned you. Actually, we want to take that back, because we don't believe anyone who abandons his children can really be called "a man." That you have been able to rise above this betrayal to become your own man, acknowledging how much your mom has made that possible. We don't know what brought you here, but we know that we cannot judge your actions by any standards other than that no child deserves what you have had to accommodate in your young life. We hope you have dreams for a better future, because we have no doubt that you have abilities and strengths that can carry you through the bad times toward achieving those dreams. We'd also be interested in reading exactly what you mean by your self-description as: intelligently insane." We know that whatever you write on that subject would be worth reading.

Lost in Legoland: A Tribute To Staff

Getting locked up is an unlucky time and hard to deal with sometimes.

I was scared and lonely, and it was staff that made it easier. I was frightened, stuck stranded and terrified, like a five-year-old kid lost at Legoland. The staff talk to me, helping me feel like it's not the end of the world. They made me feel that Juvenile is my home until the time I am out.

I do have a home out there, with a family who truly loves me. Staff's care and tenderness help times pass by quicker. I feel like I am not alone, and like there's someone that cares, even if nobody does. To me until the day I come out I remain as the staff's kid.

Taken care of us watching over us, doing things our parents would do if they were here with us. Staff has a big heart to work with us and put up with us. They deserve more then just a paycheck.

-Nhut, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a touching and wonderful tribute to the work that the most caring staff do. Yes, they deserve more than just a paycheck. When you get out - and get your life back on track - be sure to write them a letter and let them know that you remember them!

You Claim I'm Your Flesh

You claim I'm your flesh
 After eighteen years, you walked outta my life
 Put it like this
 You walked outta my mom's life when I was in her womb
 After so long, you claim me as your flesh
 A couple months after my mom was pregnant from you
 You still walked away like the chavala (punk) that you
 are
 Years passed and I didn't know who I truly was
 Because never once did you bother
 To look at me in my eyes and tell me, why?
 Why wasn't you a man to watch over your
 responsibilities?
 Never once did you visit your daughter
 But by you not showing who you were to me
 My wonders of who you were
 Came to be pure hate for the man
 That created me with my mom
 On my thirteenth birthday, you claimed me as your flesh
 Damn, what a chavala!
 After eighteen years, you walked outta my life
 Now you claim me as your daughter
 But guess what, "Jefe"
 It's too late to come back into my life
 But if you wanna know something about me
 Supposedly, I'm just like you

-Vaga, San Francisco

*From The Beat: No, you're not just like the coward your words engage/
 In this fine piece of poetic rage/You are certainly not "just like" him/
 Even if your choices put you in places that he too has been/You have
 the courage your sperm donor lacked/And it's courage you need to face
 this stark fact:/It's on you to decide what you want in your life/A future
 in freedom or enslavement and strife/Words aren't enough to undo what
 you've tasted/Time's all we've got, so don't let it be wasted!*

Bad Dreams

Dreams of your life ending
 Dreams of being shot
 Dreams of my brother getting killed
 Right there on the block
 Lord what are these dreams?
 What are they telling me?
 Dreams are dreams but it's like my dreams have become
 my own enemy.
 I lay down and cry as I try to figure out why?
 Why did I fall off the roof that was sky high?
 Why did I have to be there when my brother got shot?
 Is it my turn to die? I ask
 I begin to cry.
 All these questions roaming through my head!
 Wondering.
 I haven't ended up dead
 Thinking to myself are these dreams going to come
 true?
 Before I die am I going to get a chance to say "I love
 you?"
 Thinking about when I leave here
 How I'm going to get killed at the 16.
 Is my life really what it seems?
 I don't know but the life of my dreams are haunting me
 And right now my dreams have the best of me.

-Tay Tay, Alameda

*From The Beat: What a powerful and heart-rending poem! By writing
 these fears and terrors down, you are getting the best of these
 nightmares - and now, what if you replace them with dreams - good
 dreams about who you want to be in the future. You have to first believe
 that you are worth more, that you are worth a better life, and then fight
 for it with all your heart. Through programs, mentors, anyone who will
 help you get out of the nightmares you've been living!*

Dads

Is your dad living with you? Do you know where your
 dad is?

If you said yes to these questions, you're lucky.

If you said no, I know how you feel. Sometimes I feel
 alone. I feel like I need a male role model. It feels that I am
 alone but I'm really not.

I sometimes worry that I will become too feminine
 from being around so many females. I feel that only a man
 (father) can teach me to be a man. But when I think about
 that I also start to think if my father is a man, because I
 know being a man doesn't make you a man.

Have you ever felt alone because your father isn't
 around? Do you feel like I do?

-Lonely, Alameda

*From The Beat: We bet at least half the writers in The Beat feel the way
 you do sometimes. Not having a father must have hurt you - but are
 there other men you look up to and admire? Because a role model is any
 man who lives right and teaches you how to live right. If you don't have
 one, you can go out and find one!*

Tribute To A Helpful Counselor

Whats' up with The Beat? Me, still up in here holdin'
 strong. I looked at the topic and usually I would down
 talk the system. I'm not going to change that because the
 system is faulty, but they got some good people that work
 for the system. That's who I'm 'bout to talk about.

First they got some good counselors. I mean, yeah,
 when you first come they going to be on yo' head 'bout
 the rules, give you room time if you break them. That's
 they job. They get paid to work here. But if you do what
 you're supposed to do, then you don't have to worry about
 it. And you shouldn't be mad because they not the one's
 that locked you up. They do what they paid to do.

Sometime they can play you, but not before you play
 yourself. But if you do good and give them respect, they
 will do the same. But if you getting into it wit' other
 detainees, kickin' you door, breakin' the rules, you can't
 expect them to by-pass all that. If you show respect you
 will get respect. And it would make your time go by faster
 if you just be smooth instead of "effin' up" all the time.
 Because when you been there for a while, then if you good
 you get more privileges. It's not going to be like you on da
 outs, but you not on da outs. So make the best of yo' time
 while in da halls because even if you mess up all day, they
 are going to go home and you going to be stuck in your
 box.

Another person is my social worker. All BS aside, she
 is one of the coolest people you could ever meet. And
 she really cares about what happens to you and she is
 always there when you need her. She is easy to talk to
 and listens to your problems. She doesn't care what you
 in here for. Even if she know it's serious, she treats you
 like a human being. If there was more people like her in
 this world, it would be close to perfect. Not perfect 'cause
 nobody's perfect, but close.

I'm out from max- Unit 7 to my roommate that's bout
 to leave. Stay up, do your program 'cause you been here
 for a min. and deserve to go. Hopefully I won't be to far
 behind.

-Gold M, San Francisco

*From The Beat: We are true fans, not only of what you write, but of how
 you write it. The way you lay it out, it all seems so simple: follow the
 basic rules, don't act the fool, take advantage of some truly good people
 who want to help, and things will go much better for you. But we all
 know that things aren't that simple for many, many people (whether
 they're locked up or not). We don't know the circumstances that led you
 here (for the first time), but we can clearly see the attitude and thought
 process that will lead you out of here, and that's what we admire and
 encourage. You inspire us, so we want you to continue to inspire yourself
 (and those wise enough to recognize the truth when they see it) - and
 to take inspiration from those you pay tribute to in this fine piece.*

Stranded

Stranded in this cell
It's like a living hell
So a lil' story I'ma tell
I'm just a lil' vato from the 'hood
But don't get me misunderstood
I know I ain't doing good
But this might just happen to you
Living in the streets
Ain't as easy as it seems
Carrying guns, busting caps
But there's a time where it all stops
And you try to change
But it feels all strange
And you wanna stay
So you just keep doing your thang
People might say that gangstas don't cry
But that's just a lie
That no one can hide
So I'ma end this right now
Until the next time... al ratos

-Lil' Gallo, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire this both for what you said and for how you put so much into this fine poem! Of course you're right, change is never easy, and especially where there is so much pressure from so many not to change. It takes a lot of courage to separate yourself from the mentality that all around you seem to have and to be "different." But in the end, it's you as an individual and not a member of some gang or group that either pays the price or moves ahead. All we can say is that you show a lot of skill in putting this together, which tells us you have what it takes in brain power. Now comes the hard part — the strength that comes from heart power. Change will come. The only question is whether you will direct it or not. Good luck.

Homegirl's Dad

I had only one person take me under their wing and it was my homegirls dad.
I knew my homegirl for a long time since I was practically born.
Growing up we got into so much trouble, suspended from school in elementary, getting into stuff we weren't suppose to.
We even got kicked out of Great America because of stealing a lot of stuff and taking a cart from there.
But anyway her dad hated us being around each other
Every time I called he'd say she's not home or don't call again.
It was like that for awhile until he realized he couldn't stop keeping us from being best friends.
One day I went to her house and he answered the door
Before I said anything, he said, "we need to talk."
I was shocked. I was scared too. Ha.
But he told me I know you never meant to be who you are and I'm sorry
you never had a father figure and I'm willing to help you and do everything I can to make you a better person.
At first I was like is he kidding but it felt as if he cared.
Well I wish I could finish but I got to go back to my cell.
So now he is on my side 'till we both die.

-Jeff, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Good for you Jeff! Sounds like you have a caring friend in your homegirl's dad. We hope you can write more on this, 'cause we truly enjoyed your story. Please tell us how he has helped you and you have helped him, and what you are doing to better your life!

Wonderful Miracles

It's a miracle that I am still alive
'Cause all the shhh that I've done
The reaper says I shoulda died
Whoever said that men
Weren't supposed to cry?
Whoever told you that
It was a lie
It's a miracle how a bullet ain't touched my heart
All my life traveling the streets
And they still ain't ripped me apart
It's crazy, as a boy
I was left in the dark
My father tried to kill me
So that traumatized my heart
When I was doing all those drugs
And beating people up for nothing
Looking to kill people
'Cause I let the devil play with my buttons
Now I am doing a one-year bid
All for nothing
Voices in my head
Got me feeling like busting
I am running out of words
And now I feel like cussing
When all I gotta do
Is look to Jesus
When I feel like trusting
And now my brain is up in critical condition
From all the time it was rusting
So I read the Bible every night
And do a little dusting
It's a miracle that I know how to write
When they labeled me "Special Ed"
So I take my talent and run with it
And dedicate my poems to the dead
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: If so far you've been safe from harm from the reaper or anyone else, maybe it's because there's some karma at work because you were so abused by your dad when you were young. Whatever, your brain is trying to warn you to stop tempting the gods of war. Don't push your luck. Stop any trouble you or anybody creates, where you are now or when you get out! Listen to your mind, heart, soul. Read your own brilliant poems! They're trying to warn you to protect your precious life!

Using My Time Wisely

I use my time wisely in here, things that would help me do my time or things that could better my future. Like while I'm here, I've been getting my (high school) credits faster than before 'cause before I was behind on credits. And since being here stuck in my room all day, I understand how things in life runs better, and realize some of the stuff I used to do was "right" or "wrong," if you know what I mean.
Being locked up you could see the things you've never seen before, see life in a all-new way. What I mean is taking everything you used to have for granted, and don't realize how much your parents love you or the people that actually care and wants to help you, but we push them away.
So you know, just use your time wisely and do what benefits you while you're locked up. Set goals for yourself that would help you after y'all released.
A'ight Beat, out of time. Lates!

-Viet Ox, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's too bad that you had to lose your freedom to think seriously about all those things you took for granted before, especially the love and support of your parents that means so much. But the old saying "better late than never" applies here, and you give some excellent advice that we hope you'll be able to apply after you leave this place. Can you tell us some of the goals you've set for yourself that will help you on the outs, and how you plan to achieve them?

If These Halls Walls Could Talk

If these halls could talk, they would tell you how most of us cry at night.

If these halls walls could talk they would tell you how scared ninjas are, never say shhh to ya face always behind ya back.

If these halls walls could talk they would tell you how many wake up late at night from a nightmare.

If these halls walls could talk they would tell you how the hardest gangsta really not.

If these halls walls could talk they would tell you we all need to hear "I love you" and have a big hug too.

If these halls walls could talk, only if they could talk, what would they say.

-Ohna, Alameda

From The Beat: It's almost as if these walls can talk, through the voice you've just given them. But you wrote this so beautifully that you didn't just make them talk, you made them sing.

Using My Time!

I have been in and out of this damn place most of the time, and every time I'm here, I always work out. I also read a lot of books I do things that I don't do in the outs when I'm here. I educate myself, improve my reading skills and exercise a lot,

I read books about law and history. Spending my time in YGC is like spending my time in a private school. Many people just watch TV and play games, but me, I try to better myself, to go back out there and to show people that my time here wasn't a waste in my life. It was actually a awakening call, and a experience, of life...

-Dreamer, San Francisco

From The Beat: Our lives move forward so fast (even when it appears time is dragging) that it always encourages us to read a young person's determination to use that time and not let it go to waste. What kinds of things have you learned through the books you read? What are your goals, and what steps do you plan to take on the outs to achieve them?

Thoughts Of An Intellectual

Jail is the same as the street.

Hearts filled with larceny and deceit.

People try to make it impossible for you to eat

Everybody wants to compete

Because they think you're weak

They plot to see you leak

Want you to prove yourself

By endangering your physical and mental health

They motivate you by lust and wealth

But everything has a price

It's like rolling the dice

If you miss once not twice

You might lose your life

We live with poverty and strife

The game makes you sharp as a knife

Or it makes you blunt

Always the victim for someone on the hunt

Who hates because they see you stunt

Is the fast life worth while?

All because you want to live in style

We're living in the dark

In peril like the growl of a dog's bark

If change is in your heart

Know that you can't finish if you don't start.

-Big Wayne, Alameda

From The Beat: It's amazing how this poem describes a dark and difficult life but still manages to end on a note of encouragement and hope. What is it that YOU will need to start if you want to change your own life around, in or out of jail?

Moving Forward

When I wake up in my cell, I have a schedule planned out. I get out of my bed, stretch, wake up completely, do 30 push-ups, wash my face, brush my teeth and complete my hygiene for the morning. After completing all of these tasks, I prepare for breakfast. I eat breakfast, then return to my room where I have a few books that are very interesting.

I love to read, I think reading and exercising are the two things that help me finish my time without going crazy. Using these skills outside on the streets can definitely keep me out of juvenile hall.

The exercise is for when I get mad, release all of my anger with push-ups, sit-ups, and lifting weights. To keep a book in my hand, learn about stuff I don't know instead of being on the streets learning how to be a criminal. I've made bad choices in my life but I believe that if I can use these utilities and mature as a young man, my life would become more easier.

Being incarcerated makes me think about what I could be doing outside instead of being locked up. I always think about being in regular school, my family, and playing on the sports team at my school. I will accomplish all these goals and show everyone who said I would end up like my father that I am going to be a success.

-Ameen, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't know how your father ended up or why people say you'll follow his footsteps, but we would be willing to be money he didn't have your drive and determination to make something better of the life you've been given. We believe that the attitude you bring to any task or problem can spell the difference between failure and success, and with your attitude, we know that you can succeed. You don't have to show anyone what you're capable of doing except yourself. Keep reading and exercising your mind as you exercise your body. You can do it!

Stranded / Forgotten

I come back home and everybody sees me
They say nothin', and do nothin' to displease me

I've seen this look many times before
I'm wonderin' if I should just walk back out the door
They say or do nothin' bad so why do I still feel hurt

Looks, so cold, so cold I amount to dirt

It's a lot of people yet I'm still alone

I'm sixteen but they say I'm all grown

What's goin' on, what has happened here

Drugs, alcohol, is this the end of my teen year?

Somebody speaks up but the words hit my heart

We was once close

Now you wanna be apart

I turn in, go now, dead inside,

Now I have nothin', but me and my pride

The world is so big, but no where to go

You're grown, your sixteen, and I still don't know

Hate

Hate comes and restores my mind

Maybe I am grown 'cause hate is my crime

I have nothin' so evil I do

I feel that's the only way my points get threw

Stranded, no not stranded

Jus forgotten

-Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It is too bad no one will listen to your pleas for help, don't give up continue to ask for help. Remember one thing; if nothing else, you are not dirt. You are a very talented individual who is simply asking for some help in life. Your teen years may be coming to a close, but you still have your whole life to live for. Put away the hate in your life, all it will do is bring you down and put evil thoughts in your mind.

The Pain Of Incarceration

What's up Beat? So how does it feel to be free, at home, with your loved ones? I know how it feels. You enjoy it, right?

Well, how does it feel to be locked up? It feels like all of your life gets taken away from you. You get nasty food, wear somebody else's draws, and don't know who wore them before. You get told when you can see your family, eat, shower, write, everything.

It's pretty bad but not as bad as prison, or CYA. I've been in here a couple of times, and I've seen people come and go, and come back. And every person that leaves jail says, "I'm not comin' back" and I said the same thing... Look where I am.

I just want to know, didn't they build this new jail, so people wouldn't come back? There's nothing fun here. I'm sure nobody likes it here. So why do people come back?

What will it take for people to not come back! Do you have to go to CYA and get rapped, stabbed, killed, when will you make this your last time in jail? What will you do differently when you get out to stop the cycle and stay out of jail before it's to late.

-Convict, Alameda

From The Beat: You deliver, yet, another simple in your face, matter of fact piece of the pains of incarceration. Not a single soul could say it better. We can only hope the readers reading your work feel the same way and will take the steps to stop this incarceration cycle.

Trapped

I'm stuck in a place I don't want to be.
I'm helpless, here for reasons beyond my control.
I am trapped!

Hurt, beat down, torn up, and about to go insane.
Can someone, anyone help me think?
But no one can.
I am trapped!

Miss my home, miss my family,
Can't go back, not today.
I am trapped!

I step in the courtroom hopeful things will go my way.
Next thing I know, Bang goes the gavel!
"Detained!" shouts the judge
I am trapped!

I hope, I pray my day of freedom will once again come.
Until then,
I am trapped!

-David, San Francisco

From The Beat: You manage to capture the scary moment in court when the judge shouts "Detained!" in so few words. We feel the trap snapping shut, and we feel fear. Tell us, though, why you are in court "for reasons beyond your control." What can you do to gain that control?

*Hurt, beat down, torn up, and about to go insane.
Can someone, anyone help me think?*

Just Like You

I'm about to be eighteen on the 28th of September
Never have met my father

But I know a lil' something about him
He got other kids

He walked outta my life
This vato up in Corcoran State Prison
Honest to God

All my family is reminded that I am my "father"
When I hear them saying this and that
I wanna raise my hand at all of them
Because I ain't him

He's been in prison ever since I was in my mom's womb
I know I'm locked up

Maybe on my way to Chowchilla
But maybe off to a group home

At times I wish you would be my father, for once
Tears of hate

Tears that are cold come out of my eyes
Wishing at times you would be by my side
As a father

-Vaga, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're not sure you even know how strong a person you are! None of us can change the past, and you can't bring a father back into your life that never was there to begin with. But you can look at your own life and draw on the great strength we clearly see inside you to change directions so that some future child of yours is not left writing sad poems for a mother who isn't there for her... You've got God-given gifts that you can — and we hope you do — use to your advantage, because your life is unique. Respect it! (Oh yes, we almost forgot: Happy birthday!)

Like A Hall Of Mirrors

I'm digging my own grave to stay alive, sealing my doom more every day, getting trapped and stuck inside a game, like it's a hall of mirrors, and I don't want to play this any more. Faces so familiar it makes me cringe. What am I still doing here with these people, a clever disguise for each and every one? They live to deceive, but they say they're friends with me. Yet I know the truth and that is: I'm alone.

I have to get up off of my knees if I ever want to leave this shhh behind, but with this wretched ball and chain, how am I ever going to really escape? I'm a runner. That's the truth. But lately I've been sitting around, letting myself get used to my surroundings.

Plans... I hate them. Mine always seem to fall through. I almost can't even breathe here. The spirits of the damned are like smoke that suffocates me and leaves me sneezing and bleeding, writhing and dying on the floor. Choking, I need to leave. I need to run.

Just leave me alone. I never asked you to acknowledge my existence. But soon you'll be able to forget it, because one day I'll get fed up with doing the same shhh, working my way up from square one every time. One day I'll throw it down and leave forever.

-Lemmings, San Francisco

From The Beat: Brilliantly written, but an admission of some confusion (which is absolutely understandable). What is the "wretched ball and chain" that keeps you from moving ahead. Is it addiction? Family turmoil? Your environment? What does it mean to be a runner? Do you run from or to? And if you are running towards something, what is that something? If you are running away, one of the most difficult things in the world to do — but one of the most rewarding — is to turn and face the demons that pursue you and disarm them with that simple but profound act. One day we'll all leave forever. It's what we do between now and then that counts.

What I been Through In My Life

1. You don't know what it is like growing up without a father and your mother having no job and you having to sleep here and there and not know when you going to eat your next meal.. if your sister and you are going to school with some holes in your shoes and cloths.

2. You don't know how it is having to run from group homes so you can get back with your family and make sure they are safe and having to run from your step mother' house and having to steal out of stores to eat, and how it is to sleep behind a trash can ...and the next day you wake up at some lady house with her saving you from dying from some man trying to rape you.

You don't know how scared I was when that lady tried to touch me and give me a hug when I told her what I been through. You don't know how I was feeling when that lady put me on a bus and sent me to my mother and now I was feeling when I saw my mother again and my sister and Lil Brother.

3. You don't know how it was running, around looking over my shoulder for 5-0, you don't how it was when I walked in the court room and told the judge what I want to do and why I want to be with my mother and how that lady took me in with her and sent me to my mother --and how happy I was when I got back in my mother care.

4. You don't how it is having to sell drugs and steal cars and rob people to get want you want and need, for your family to have some where to lay they heads. Or how it was when my mother started doing drugs and me and my older sister had to pay the bills and put food on the table and clothes on our backs and our lil' sisters and brother. Or how it was when your own mother started you asking for some coke, and you having to run away so you would sell it to her and how we had to lock our own mother out because she might sell everything in the house to get her high on.

5. You don't know how it was when your girlfriend tell

you she 9 months with your child and she about to get kicked out by her mother. You don't know how it was running the streets all day doing what ever it was to get money in your pockets and how it was having ninjas hating because you're eating, or how it was running for your life when ninjas came through shooting .

You don't know how it was when you caught your first case and your sisters and brother and baby mama out there trying to make it with out you, and having to get out and put in some real work and make some bodies drop . You don't know how it was watching our right hand man die in your hands, the only ninja you trusted and knew he was there with you no matter what. You don't know how it was to put him in the ground and looking around and you don't see no one but your family and his mother crying their eyes out.

6. You don't know how it was coming to jail and some ninja couldn't keep his mouth shut so you got do some time and how it was you sitting in jail and your mother come to see you and tell you she done with drugs and she just want to be a mother and you mother asking you to tell your sisters and baby mama she came to see her kids.

7. You don't know how it is having to see your son behind a window and not touching him and how it was when your son turns one year old and all you can do is send him a letter and tell him Happy Birthday. You don't know how it is doing time, not knowing when you're getting out to be back with your family.

I just had to get all that off my chest and tell somebody about why I'm stressing in here.

-Lil' Maine, Alameda

From The Beat: After reading this incredible, passionate, angry and wonderful piece, we still don't "know" how all these experiences have been for you. What we DO know is that you have managed, somehow, to keep your love and your caring very much alive after facing things that would have made a weaker person lose heart. You have been carrying the world on your shoulders for far too long, and now you need - and deserve - support so you can rise above these sorrows. Imagine the book you could write about your life, and how you can show other people who suffer like you have - a way out.

*...all you can do is send him a letter
and tell him Happy Birthday.*

Under My Wing: RIP Joshua Crockett

I took a boy named Joshua under my wing. It was me and my cousin Leon. We did all we could for him but after we all left school he got killed.

I think all the time if we would have kept him at school and kept him doing the right thing then maybe he wouldn't have got killed...we were all like brothers even though I was the youngest. I had more knowledge than Josh so he was treated like the youngest.

Just like the youngest in the family, he was given almost anything and was in trouble for almost nothing. We had a friend named Rose, which was Josh's older sister. She was who introduced us and told us personally to look after her little brother, and as long as we could, we did. We kept him from sellin' drugs, and getting' into trouble, and for a while from using drugs. It was only for about seven months but we did our best. But I guess our best wasn't good enough this time.

-Dre, Alameda

From The Beat: This is one of the more heartbreaking pieces we have read in a long time... it also leaves us wanting to know more about this special young man. What do you think tempted him into trouble, despite the family's best efforts? And do you think right now there are loved ones of yours, wishing just as hard that they could rescue YOU from the streets?

Movement of Transportation, That Connection To Life

Speak what's on your mind never hold back
Contains a access that travel away down a lonely track
Transport that tool to help others who are unable

Similar tool that's sure to be fable
Matter of knowledge in wisdom is up to you
Nervous isn't a place in your vocabulary box
This is the knowledge of education that's pulled out the sock

Hold that empire that's inside of your head
That's something nobody can take away into your gone-dead

Thought to thought benefits where your life stands
But because you have all the knowledge doesn't mean
you're a man

Mention that skill you never knew you had
Without a skill or potential you're dead and sad
Constantly study the knowledge you're in custody of
Even if you don't I still believe in you it's all love
Just rise to the top where you suppose to live
And use the talent God have given to profess
Dwell it down or swallow 'cause life isn't no test.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, wow, wow. Lil' Papa, your poetry skills just grow and improve and expand each week. Your thoughts are getting more complex, your mind wider, and best of all, like a true poet, you have begun moving beyond your own personal feelings to embracing the universe as a whole. Bravo!

He

He's lonely and cold
 In his dark little hole
 Blind folded
 From the good
 Because of
 Hidden scars
 And broken dreams
 Silent cries
 And silent screams
 And promises
 Never seen
 He's seen the light but
 He ran from it
 Now he's doing time
 And he can't handle it
 Handle it
 Like the way he uses keen blades
 To temporarily
 Numb his pain
 Is he insane?
 Or lost in his own
 Sinister ways

-Dreamcatcher, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a poem you deliver to us readers. Is this based on your own experiences? What inspired this poem? What is next for you on this journey?

Ha Ha

I laugh at the weak. When I say the weak, I mean those who don't apply themselves in life or whatever you do, such as school, work, and family. Me personally, I'm so motivated in everything I do.

Right now I'm in a jam, but I can't wait to bounce back and continue working and going to school. I am a hustler, I hustle my school for a education and I hustle my job for the money I need to provide for myself and family. I do what it do.

Ninjas need to get they mind right because the clock is tickin', time is getting shorter and shorter. Those that aren't applying themselves are funny. Ha ha!

-Young E-web

From The Beat: We truly admire you for wanting to make something better of your life by getting your education, working for your money, and thinking about how to use your time today to bring about what you want tomorrow. But we really don't understand why you would laugh at those who aren't as motivated as you. Instead of laughing at them, can't you use your talents to make them see that it's in their interest to follow your lead, and to use their time wisely? That would make you a teacher as well as a student!

Using My Time

Using my time wisely tryin' not to go insane,
 Tryin' to stay ahead of the game,
 I've got to maintain in this life I live,
 I read 'cause reading is knowledge
 And knowledge is power,
 Hittin' dips and curls,
 Try to keep my head from going in swirls,
 I feel like I could snap any time and day,
 So I don't count every second of the day
 Using my time wisely trying not to go insane

-Staying Sane, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We wish you had put your name to this tight poem so we'd know who we are addressing... Yes, knowledge is power, so tell us some of things you read and what new knowledge you've learned. To reduce the stress that makes you want to snap, have you ever tried meditation or other relaxation tools?

Using Your Time

The way I would use my time while incarcerated to not come back is to listen when I'm in school so that I would at least leave here with some type of education. 'Cause when I was on the outs, I didn't never go to school fo' shhh. I was too busy smokin' 'dro or tryin' to come up wit' some money quick, 'cause that was how I was thinking. Just smoke some weed an hit a lick.

I wasn't thinking of the consequences of my actions. That's why I'm in here now, because I wasn't thinking of my actions. So, since I've been locked up for so long, what I'm thinking right now is to do whatever's possible to not ever come back.

-Young Meel, San Francisco

From The Beat: If coming in here and spending the amount of time you've had to spend here makes you realize the importance of school to move your life forward, then maybe it was worth it. Of course, when you're locked up, it's much easier to promise to do whatever you need to do to stay out than when you're actually out and faced with the same temptations that led you here. Then it requires some personal courage — some inner strength — to remember what you hated about being locked up, and to turn away from the momentary fun or quick money to the long-term goal of freedom. Stick with your promise, and you won't disappoint yourself!

Using My Time

I use my time by working out and reading as much as I can. That helps me get stronger both physically and mentally. Mentally getting stronger will help me gain a better understanding of things, while getting stronger physically will help me stand my ground when the numbers favor those who oppose...

-Shotgun, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We wish you had added more details, because you obviously have used your time wisely to enrich your mind (not to mention your body). Do you read everything that comes your way, or are there kinds of books you particularly like? What would you like to learn more about that is difficult to do from where you are?

Stranded

He left me without answering
 Why now and why me?
 He never answered me back
 Many years later he wants to be seen

I was two then
 And now I'm seventeen
 He left me stranded
 Now wants to be a father to me!

I felt so lost and uncertain
 So I didn't know what to do
 Should I let him come back?
 My mind wont let me choose

I love him don't get me wrong
 But why now he comes back?
 He left for a reason
 Drugs were more important and that's a fact

He left me stranded
 Now the question is this
 Should I leave him hangin'
 Or make him chase after his wish!

-Lady Joker, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, Lady Joker, what a really powerful poem. The pain of being left 'stranded' by the person who was supposed to care for you most in the world really comes through in what you write here. It must have been an incredibly tough decision for you to make. Did you decide to see your father and is he a part of your life now? We'd love to hear about which path you chose and how things have changed as a result.

Can You Forgive Me, Carnal?

Carnal, forgive me for not stopping you from takin' the wrong path, for not being conscious while I took you on the road of destruction. Carnal, forgive me for allowing my misery be your company, for sharing wit' chu the drink of the devil, for inhaling the smoke of hell wit' chu, for encouraging you to hurt, mutilate, an' kill, for making you laugh when you was supposed to cry.

Homey I regret not taking care of you an' permitting you to let your guard down an' see you die. Carnal, would you ever forgive me for surviving an' 'cause it wasn't me who had you in his arms when you died?

-Lil' Lazy, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is extremely sad to read. We know your carnal would forgive you, but we don't know if you can forgive yourself. How can you take your life in a different direction so that you won't have to worry about letting your guard down because you won't be in anyone's line of fire? The hard fact is that you are alive, and this life is all we've got. Treasure it!

Thinking

I've been thinking on why do they have to put a man down and lock us up. They think they can regulate us, but they're just making us worse. It ain't right. It's outrageous to lock me up, a boy trying to be a man. Just trying to do right and make my family proud.

Everything was going great until my world as I once knew comes crashing down on me, and here I am in juvenile hall in the max waiting to get sentenced. And when I think about it, it's my rage and anger that got me here. I thought that nothing could hurt me, but being in here does hurt. Not able to see my loved ones or my girl really hurts, and I would do anything to just be able to turn back and fix everything. But things happen, and all I have left is time to think.

-Big Kid, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You say that all you have is time to think, but time to think is critical, especially if your thinking leads you to new understandings and, perhaps, new directions. If you're saying that locking you up and taking you from all that you love is counter-productive, only increasing your rage, we entirely understand that point of view. At the same time, you acknowledge that you did something inappropriate due to your existing anger and rage, so we want you to put your keen mind to the task of thinking about what would be an appropriate and productive response to whatever it was that you did that got you here. In other words, if this is wrong and doesn't work, what is right and does work?

Using My Time

What I been doin' in the days I spend in my room... I have think about and what I did, and try to analyze and find the bad thing I did. This way I know that if I do it one more time, I be back in this cell. I just read my Bible and I try to fine some hope in what my Bible say. And that really help me to make time go faster and give me hope. It also make me see that I'm important to this world and to all the people who love me and want me to do right.

I see into myself and see that I can do much better than what I have, because I'm a intelligent person and I know that if I put myself together, I can do anything I want in this life. I'm still young and I have a long way to go, and a dream that I want to come true. All I have to do is believe in myself, and do what I have to do.

-The Outsider, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are so right — believe in yourself and achieve the dreams you have. What lessons has the Bible given you that have helped you through this difficult time? Knowing what you have to do (and not do) to stay out of places like this is important, but it's not enough. You also have to be able to say "No" when those temptations come in front of you and you think you might be able to get away with something. We know you can do it, but only you will be able to show us that you have done it. Good luck!

*... I can do anything I want
in this life.*

Long Live The Struggle

Hey, w'as up, Beat? Shhh, I'm just chillin', waiting to go home on September 26th, my eighteenth birthday. But it's been rough for the past couple of weeks. I'm on TRG (room time) program, and I think I'm going to be on it for a while, maybe until I leave. But it's cool shhh, just doing my time, you know? Can't stop, won't stop.

But, anyways, I wanted to talk about something serious—well, for me, and people that feel me, aight? It's about authority not letting us represent Cesar Chavez or the huelga. I really don't understand when I draw the huelga bird to represent Chavez; I get in trouble and all the staff that grinds my gears, for reals. That what I represent, that's my history, my pride, and I hate when people tell me when I can't represent my roots.

Think about it. Chavez is a person that fought for rights, like many other people of color and background. But why, when we represent Chavez, it's gang-related? It's like all of a sudden these people want to take a Latino's history away. Hu?

Like in school, every day history of some sort. Right?—Black history month, etc. I mean, I don't have problems with that, but what about Latino history? In school—half a lesson, and that's it. Latino history is done. There's been great Latino leaders that made a change, am I right? So we deserve the same time spent to learn about our people.

But back to my point. The huelga bird—it's a symbol like the American flag—it symbolizes the people, the nation. Everyone has a symbol to symbolize what they're about. Why it's been taken to symbolize a gang? Well, that is another subject that I can talk 'bout, but later.

Back when I was young, my grandpa was a farmer. I remember the big red flag with a symbolic black bird hanging on the wall. I didn't know nothing back then, but when I get older, I found the courage to ask. He told me great stories of him and his friends working on the fields. A great man named Cesar Chavez was helping them for better wages and labor laws. How my grandpa explained him—he was like a god to him.

I kept learning more about Cesar and the cause, "La Causa," my whole youth. I was taught and I learned more and more—that's why I know what I know. I thank my grandpa for doing what he did. Because of him I know what I represent. I'm not ignorant. I can fight back when people tell me to not draw the symbolic bird. Shhh, it's my history no matter what they do—give me more time in my room—I'll never take down a picture of Cesario Chavez, for reals. The flag my grandpa had is with him in Mexico. But I had one--the damn SWAT Team took it from my house, morons. I felt like crying. You know, I never felt that way before. It's deep, homies. It's really. It felt like they took my pride, but they didn't. Well, that's it, Beat. Peace. Viva La Huelga.

-Payaso, Marin

From The Beat: With a pen-name like Payaso (is that gang related?) one gets pissed off as to why the Huelga bird or Chavez are seen in a bad light by authorities, well, because many young gangsters, especially those associated with the Nortenos, take advantage of the huelga bird and what Cesar Chavez stood for. We seen plenty of this disrespect over the years. That's why we have to now be cautious about allowing Huelga birds in The Beat. From what you've written, it's not clear why any authorities would give you trouble other than the name you use in this piece.

Using My Time

I think I have used my time wisely, because all this time I've spent in these halls I've been tryin' to educate myself so that I can complete high school and get a diploma. So I spend my time reading, working out, and doin' makina with my homeboy.

All this time I've been here, I've been trying to set goals for myself so that I can succeed in life and so that I can not only be known as a Soldado, but also be known as havin' a successful career like a few of my homeboys have completed. So I know that I'm not wastin' my time up in here, like a lot of people are up in here, I know I've been successfully workin' myself mentally and physically.

Now I dismiss my self in full stride.

-Young Speedy

From The Beat: Keep striding forward. What is the career you're working toward, and what steps do you need to take to get there? How close are you to achieving your diploma? Is there anything we can do to help? We think your education is the key to this cage, and we think you're very wise to see that.

Using My Time On The Outs

I use my time in many ways, not always wise. I'll start off with the not so wise. Like hanging out with the wrong people. People that do not have as much potential as me or doing things that will jeopardize the freedom I've been accustomed to.

On the flip side I seem to pledge myself to hang out with my younger relatives KK and Z-Man. I feel like they're my up when I'm down, my sun when it's raining. To sum it all up, they're my pride and joy. If it's one thing in this world that I would give my life to, it's my family. RIP (Mom) aka Stormy.

-Cuba, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're lucky to have family that lifts you when you fall. But, of course, they don't want you to die for them. They want you alive and free to be with them. If you know you're putting yourself in jeopardy by the people you hang with, then it's up to you to resist the desire to do that because you, not they, are paying the price. Make your mom proud from above, and make yourself proud. You definitely have what it takes!

Under My Wing: Passing It On

I've been taken under somebody's wing before. During my young life growing up my big bro' was locked up and I never really had a father-figure, so I had a cousin/friend for a long time look over me while I was young, growin' up with my bro locked up and no father.

So he basically looked over me, and showed me the game and showed me how to get by in this messed up world. And I thank and love my bro' for that. I also took one of my lil' cousins under my wing, took care of him and showed him the game just like I was taught. He never had a father figure either and don't have no brother, so I took the big brother role. I love him - to my lil' bro.

I learned how to survive. How to defend myself, how to get money to put food on my plate and clothes on my back, all the necessary things I needed in life, then I passed the same game and advice to my lil' cousin. Now we both fathers so now we have to be the best fathers to our kids 'cause we didn't have fathers around, so we gon' show them the ropes to get through this messed up life.

-Ruskie, Alameda

From The Beat: There's so much love and heart in this poem, from the cousin who tried to take you under his wing, to the boy you are not trying to watch over, to the new babies you are both fathers too. But the thing is, this game is set up to lose - and you know it. Look how many people have died, look at how many people you have lost to the system... you and your boy need a new system, new knowledge, new skills, so you can raise your children into a new life!

Time Change

Jan. 26, 2007, the day I came to jail was on my anniversary.

I had so many plans to do. I washed my car, cleaned myself and my jewelry, ironed my clothes and cleaned the inside of my car. When I was done with that, I went to school to pick up my girl so we could go eat, and at twelve noon, I decided to go home, 'cause I forgot my earrings on my bed.

When I got home, I decided to take a shower again because I was hot and plus I was gonna pick up my girl at three. Once I got out the shower, I put on my PJ's and I laid on my couch to relax my body. When I looked at the time on my clock, it was 1 p.m. and all a sudden my potna called me to tell me some things about what I did or what I so-called did. I didn't know what he was talking about, so I told him to come holla at me at my house and he was hesitating to say yes so I kept telling him to come to the house and finally he said yeah.

I asked him when he was comin', and he said two or three, so when I hung up the phone I went to sleep and was waiting for him to come. When three o' clock came up, my potna woke me up and he told me SWAT was outside. I told him he was lyin' and went back to sleep.

Two minutes later, he said "look outside one time," so I did, and I saw nothing but trucks, cars, snipers, helicopters, police and streets blocked off.

After that, I came to the hall. My first day I was in Max. Ever since then I been in Max, I'm still in max.

I been locked up for 7 1/2 months, 239 days, 86,400 mins 20,759,600 seconds.

- J-Money, Alameda

From The Beat: Man, that must have been a terrible moment -when you looked out the window and saw all the forces closing in on you. But it doesn't have to signal the end of your story, it can mean the beginning of a new way of thinking of your life and what matters to you. We are amazed at how well you have held onto your heart through these 7 and a half months, and we believe your heart will get you through all the struggles coming up as well. Peace.

Thanx

I dedicate my thanx

To all that have helped me

Family, counselors, staff,

Teachers, friends, and any other

Who have dedicated their lives

To help me to the end

Of the road to go and live on my own

With knowledge, determination, and courage

Tools and strategies of the new world,

You didn't have to

Use your life to educate me,

Help me build my endurance of life,

And my brain, see,

You might've thought,

Because I'm a troubled kid

That I might not have understood

And absorbed it, but,

I did and I'ma bounce back,

With my thanks, and you can

Have that.

Thanx for helping me become a man because I am,

I would to better things.

-Halo, San Francisco

From The Beat: For all who have helped you move forward, getting your thanks is very important. But the real thanks comes in seeing you become the man that you are becoming and the commitment you've made to do better things and become a better person. For that, the thanks goes to you.

Soaked With Tears

The murder rate in Oakland is gonna make history
'Cause when ninjas die it's all a mystery,
In jail right now but I know a couple people miss me.
It's a rough life

What you can do once you can do twice,
Hoping they don't give my boy them 25 years,
I know his county t-shirt is soaked with tears,
And I can't lie. It hurts so much inside,
That it makes me want to cry,
I'll probably never see him again,
He's 17 years old and he going to the pen
And me, I am fighting my case so I am in trial,
The DA trying to keep me here for a while,
But I still find time to smile.

-Baby Q, Alameda

From The Beat: Finding time to smile is your best weapon against the heartlessness of the system and the streets, because it means so much more than just a smile, it's also a way of connecting to all that is human and good in you, even as the world might seem like it's trying to stomp that out.

Got To Get Out

Hey, what's up? I know it's hard, but you gotta keep yo' head up. I'm still tryin' to. You gone to get out one day. You just got to think positive and prey every night before you go to sleep. When you prey you got to believe in God. If you believe in him, he will answer your prayer.

When you go to court you have to tell the judge if she or he lets you out you are going to be looking at a better life. Sometimes it won't hurt to shed a tear so the judge will have sympathy for you. Have yo' mom tell the judge she want you home.

-Rick, San Francisco

From The Beat: We know that you wrote this to someone in particular, but since we don't allow direct communication between people in The Beat, we had to take out your references to that other person. On the other hand, we think the advice you gave him is so good that it can be applied to many, many people who are locked up. Take a slice of your own advice, and keep your head up!

What's up Beat?

It looks like I'll be here until December and all I will have is time. So what I'm going to do in the time frame is work-out, read books, read the Bible, write letters, learn things in school, get visits, and keep myself busy. That's how I'm going to use my time wisely, so when I leave to where ever it is, I'll be bigger, smarter, and ready for the real world. Last time I thought I was ready, but I was not and I still have a lot to learn. But that's what life is about.

-Convict, Alameda

From The Beat: We love your attitude. It's a pleasure to work with you and to watch your leadership on the unit. You have our respects and good thoughts, always!

Using Your Time

How can I use my time while incarcerated? That's the question I ask myself. Every time I come in here, I tell myself I'm going to do something different with my time, so I started to do hell a push ups and sit ups. I started writing a lot a lot and reading hell a books. I met a good man who really cared about some of the detainees and let them come to the Omega Boys Club meetings.

-Juvy Jabba Holie

From The Beat: It sounds like this time you really are doing something different with your time. What is the best thing, the things you learn the most from Omega? What kind of things do you like to write, and what do you like to read? Keep u p the good work.

Not Me At All

My struggle ain't different from the rest.
I should have stayed at home then put that weed in my chest.
Eye low trying not to be caught in flow
So I rebel, not listening not caring about the rest
Saying forget you if you cross me.
Family and all now, who do I have to call
While I'm sitting in this lonely hall
Coming to my senses, realizing how I was acting wasn't me at all.

-Majia, Alameda

From The Beat: Sometimes it doesn't take too many lines to get at a great truth. This poem says more in eight lines than some would in thirty - about what you have been through, about the pain of being in jail, about how sometimes pain brings clarity. We are looking forward to publishing more of your work!

Mentally, I'll...

Damn, man... I can't stop doing it
I don't know if I am mental
'Cause my brain won't pull through with it
This disease, I grew wit' it
It's like forty percent of my heart
Picture the inside of me, all black
But forty per cent more dark
I got a weird way of thinking
Like pulling licks upon the BART
But like aerodynamics
My thoughts is like a vehicle
Torn between life and death
So I am probably (ha ha) mid-evil
I am addicted to like them dope fiends
We probably shared the same needle
This poem ain't for the brave
It's for the insane people
This is a new game, people
There is no cure for me
You know what a pureblood is
Well, mentally, I pure bleed
I creep with greed
And somehow I can't stop thinking evil thoughts
When people bleed
And everywhere I go
Evil follows me
I even sleep in greed
I am sorry, I can't help it
But I am just a minority
God have mercy on my soul
And grant me your clemency
I am a leave a legacy
So when I die
The earth would remember me
I don't wanna go to no funeral
So, surrender, please
And in my mind
I am shaking with trembling knees
They ain't just regular
I got Gremlin needs
It's just my dark side
Don't worry
I am mentally
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like something in your imagination is eating at you. You allude to it, but like always, you evade anything solid, your images evanesce. Even if you don't want to put your past, your business, out there in your poems, if something is really torturing you, why don't you talk to someone you trust? Maybe it's guilt, confusion, terror? Whatever it is, get the help you need now.

Trapped In This Body

In 1989, this body was designed to harness a soul
 As I watched these dark creatures steal my halo
 And clip my wings
 My body became one with the rest of these human beings
 Accustomed to this body of sin
 That is easily tempted to play in the devil's playground
 Where there are signs in the sky that say
 "Here you can play
 Now, as long as your soul stays
 At the devil's playground"
 Where my soul is contained by hot ground
 In a body that my brain has not found
 Trapped in this body
 Where my insides scream "God"
 And my lungs scream "Air!"
 But my tongue scream "Sin!"
 If you wanna really read somebody
 Then search their eyes
 Because their eyes is the gateway to their soul
 Trapped in this body
 Where my tools get old
 Waiting for the answer
 As I beg the Lord Jesus
 To deliver me from this prison
 Trapped in this body
 Where no one can hear my soul scream
 Barely hanging on to this life
 Like string beans
 Wanna know what makes up my soul?
 Strange things
 Something that the human brain
 Is never supposed to understand
 But how can you
 When you're trapped?
 Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: When you think about yourself, do you look like you feel about yourself? Does your wild, genius imagination bring others to you? Do you have friends? Who do you feel close to? If you were to scream out loud what's torturing you, what would you shriek? Would it be close to what you write in your poems?

That Day

It all started in a fifth de mayo. I woke up happy c'ause I was going to meet some of my hardcore OG's from my hood. I went to my room, pulled out my black dickeys, white T and fresh Air Forces. Jump in the shower grabbed my gun and headed to my scraper. I was slappin' some paisa shhh (Los Inquitos).

I went to the park. Hella homies were there and it was barely 9:00 in the morning... I was drinking some coranitas, eating carne asada, having fun with the girls.

Then my baby mama called me to go to her house, so I tell the homies I'll be back. I took my home boy so we went walking, I had my gun. We got to my girl's house, and we started to eat some taquitos. Then she grabbed my hand and she told me she felt something bad going to happen. She told me to spend the night in her house, but I wanted to put in some work, so I cut back to the park. The homies wasn't there no more, they cut to another street.

So we go over there. We going hella dumb with our Mexican flags and rags. Representing our cultura. Then some enemies past by and somebody started to bust. I started to run because hella police came. Then I seen my cousin past by, so he saw me and gives me a ride to my girl's house.

Hella family was there to see the Oscar De La Hoya boxing fight. When that shhh was over I cut to the house call my homie to bring my scraper back, so he brought it. I got my money and went to pick up my baby mama but she wasn't ready so I went to leave my scraper at the house and my homie Jose went to pick me up riding, stunning. We pick up my other homie. We riding back to pick up my girl when some rivals started to bust at us with a chop. So I pulled out my gun and let it loose, but a police officer saw me and in less then a minute I had the whole police squad on my ass. Now I'm doing 2 years in the Y.

-Dots, Alameda

From The Beat: There's two sides to this piece, one good, one bad. The good is that you told this story so well, with a clean eye for detail that takes your reader on a trip, like we're going through it with you. Bad is that you lost two years of your life (and time with your new child) to this b.s. And those rivals of yours were also latino, which means you were blasting on your own people on a day of national pride. Is that "cultura"?

My Heart

I got a one -year-old son sitting at home,
 Asking where his mom is at.
 When he's in pain, I feel it 'cause that's my heart.
 When he's at home with his dad and they're both crying I
 feel it 'Cause they both my heart.
 Sometimes I wish I should've stayed at home
 But when money calls I go
 I wish I should've stayed at home with my son
 Because he come first
 And plus that's my heart.
 Every night I sit in my room and cry
 And look at his pictures
 And hold them tight
 ... because that's my heart.

-Lil' Shawnee, Alameda

From The Beat: Speaking of hearts, this lovely poem just about broke ours. That image of you crying in a cell, holding your baby's picture instead of your baby, is just devastating. There is nothing in the world more important than your love, your soul, your heart. We hope when you get out you post this incredible poem up on your wall, so that when money calls, you can turn to your own words and they will keep you where you belong.

Trust It

I can't save my country
 My country wouldn't save me
 Back in the day they was slaving
 On they knees they was praying
 For a better life they was praying
 For a better life and a new beginning
 Now we have it, we be trippin'
 All deez killings, it be pitiful,
 It be taking me a minute to recover
 All my loved ones know I love you
 Know we represent the struggle
 Do anything for you
 I will bleed for my brothers for eternity
 Hope you trust it

-HtwoOCal, Alameda

From The Beat: It's good to finally print your terrific poems, instead of just listening to them in the units - and yeah, there's a modern-day version of slavery that is almost more pitiful than the old one, because it's a terrible mental enslavement. But writing and thinking and imagining your way out of it is a step towards freedom. Do you personally consider yourself free? And if not, what will it take for you to free yourself?

Stranded

I was about nine years old and I sure didn't like the cemetery. I used to watch movies that dead people would come alive. One time my brother and his friends decided to go to the cemetery and kick it, and he wanted me to go with him, so I did. Every time he go somewhere, I would go. I would be right next to him.

I got high and I closed my eyes for a quick hot minute. I opened my eyes and nobody was around me. I didn't want to move, so I waited for twenty minutes for them to come back, but they didn't. The cemetery was big. I started crying. I peed on myself, I was so mad. He was looking for me, so when he seen me, my brother started laughing at me. From there, I didn't kick it with him at all.

-Lucero

From The Beat: We don't really think what your brother did to you was funny at all. Even if he didn't mean to scare the pee out of you (we would feel the same way), this is a memory you will always have. Sometimes, a "practical joke" is just plain cruel. Thank you for taking us on this scary adventure with you.

Not Enough Time

Life's a mess, you can't understand why we struggle for it.

I'm not suicidal I just have a wish
 And still don't know what it is the good die young
 I think about being the guy with the gun

So I write to kill
 Struggling to make a dollar bill
 Start to go uphill

Just to fall back down
 Damn, so close to that gold crown life's a...
 Feeling sick

It's hard to express myself
 I'm drowning in my thoughts
 Too slow to keep up what to do?
 I don't know how did I get this far
 Damn thoughts, racing even faster
 Will I go to college get my masters? Trying to rhyme
 running out of time....time....time....
 need more time....
 To hell with it all.

-Mystery, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We called you "Mystery" because you didn't write your name. Normally we would just not publish a piece with no name on it, but this particular poem was too good to miss out on! You really put us inside your mind, so we felt all your thoughts rushing around while you wrote. Next time, take credit for your work!

A Breath Of Fresh Air

Yo, it's young Halo
 I'm off to Colorado
 But not yet I will
 Say adios, so,
 Pretty soon I'll be out —
 Fresh air a mile high,
 Breathin' in and out,
 Lookin' in the sky,
 Freely, being me,
 Doing things so peacefully,
 Do my own,
 Now I gotta go,
 Mahalo, from Halo

-Halo, San Francisco

From The Beat: We've watched you grow, so near a man/Your state of mind tells us you can/Achieve whatever goals are on your list/And though we wish you luck, you will be missed!

My Shhh

S'up wid The Beat? It's ya boy, back once again! I'm trying to make it my last. Hopefully that could be true, feel me. I'm trying to get on with my life.

My block still gone be there when I get out the grouper! So if I do it, I can go to the block and not trip off the police! I could tell them my name, some fake bs, and I could laugh at 'em and not trip if they take me to the pig pen because I'ma get out instead of coming back to juvenile hall.

This shhhh get old. I'm trying to go to high school! Dat's something new to me! I ain't been to school since my 8th grade graduation. I'm supposed to be in 10th grade now! All my credits is from juvie or a group home! Im trying to change that! I'm trying to go back to my grandma's and get a job and do good! But I gotta get this new grouper in see if ya boy feeling it because I thank I could do it! I just gotta make sure the grouper ain't finna try to play me because then ya boy gone be out and back to the 'hood where it's good! Feel me?

So I hope this shhhh work out because I'm ready to man up! But if it don't, back on da run I go! I guess we gone see what god got in store for me ! What was meant for ya boy to do!

-White boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: There's a little bit of split personality in this piece. While we applaud your desire to go back to school and to do what it takes to change what has already cost you so much freedom, we also see signs of the boy who isn't ready to "man up" (like your promise to run if things aren't as you want them to be). Our own view is that whether it's a grouper, a rehab program, or even a job, success has much more to do with the attitude you bring to it than what is actually there. If you look for the meaningful, that's what you'll find. But if you look for what you're not feeling, then you won't be feeling it... We hope you make it. Keep an open mind.

Best Book: The Perfect Storm

The best book I ever read was The Perfect Storm. It is about fishing boats. They fish for sword fish. I'm still reading the book but I'm reading it because I'm locked up and it seems like a good book. I'm reading this because It's a good book about the fisherman that get caught in storms out at sea, and about the storm they get caught in. It taught me about how storms get going and why waves get so big, and what a rouge wave is.

The book is for entertainment, I mean how is a book about some other people's lives going to help me in any way? There are good stories in the book but no nothing to teach me. The book is about fisherman that go out and fish for swordfish and get caught in storms. They think about their families and friends.

This one guy named Boh had a wife but she left him cause he was gone 7 months out of the year. One of the boats flipped over and 73 people died. In the storm 4 boats get caught in the storm and 4 captains stopped fishing. The Crow's Nest is a really good bar that every one goes to, all the fishermen go there after they get back from fishing. The story ends like this: There were boats out and only three are left.

-Chris, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's funny how reading is such a "school" thing that people forget it really have to "teach" you anything, so long as it takes you away and expands your mind. And we bet you know a lot more about fishing now than you did before! And about how hard people fisherman work, and about the incredible power of the ocean. And maybe even it made you think a little bit about life, and death, and the mystery of how they work.

Helpful And Not So Helpful Counselors

I want to thank a couple of counselors, who help me on my way, understand my feelings, and want me to do better. They make me laugh and I make them laugh too. They try to help me on my schoolwork and they answer my questions the best they can. They have that passion burning in them and some of the counselors are just like us. Some of them bring in stuff for us to enjoy and help us when we need help or ask for it. Thank you very much.

And you wonder what makes a bad counselor in my eyes? The ones who want to see you suffer and mess with you. The ones who pick favorites and act like immature ass kids themselves, and those that give you hours for the stupidest shhh. They should be fired or runned over by a cement truck.

My piece is dedicated to good counselors: Mr. Henderson, Mr. Humbolt, Mr. Ajanson, Mr. Woodson, Ms. Martian and Mr. Garibaldison.

- Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're not sure you spelled their names correctly, but we do hope they see from your piece how much you appreciate the good they bring to their job. Thanks for the piece and even educating us on what makes a poor counselor, definitely not the men you mentioned.

Using My Time

Juvie can boring quick. A good way to make time pass by is to have a program. You gotta have a schedule and stick with it breakfast, school, lunch, school, workout, dinner, activity then the rest of the time you're free to chill or jump into a book.

The main things that I do to keep my mind busy is read and workout. It's good to have a good book it's like TV in here. I always read after activity. I workout after school and write letters or play games during after activity.

Well I think that if you don't have a good program for yourself you'll go crazy. Having a good program would make time pass by easier.

- Xnotoriousviet, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We appreciate the insight and we hope our young readers do too.

I Was Stranded

The only time I feel stranded is when I'm locked up. I feel like no one is really there. When my parents don't come to see me, it just makes me feel like shhh.

My homies ain't doing the time with me and can't come see me.

I sometimes feel like I just wanna be put to sleep until my time is up.

This is a place that once you're in your unit there's no way out

and you can't breathe fresh air or see the sunset.

That's what gets to me,

because I know I could be out there chilling with the homies and my family.

Instead, I'm here locked up because I didn't listen to my mom or my homies

when they told me to stay home and finish my program. But I didn't listen, so now I'm locked up again because I wasn't thinking.

Now, I realize I should have listened but I'm stranded.

With that said, I'm out. Late.

-Judy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It seems like a lot of young women end up incarcerated for violating their programs, just because they get frustrated and act without thinking. Even though you are stuck in the Hall, maybe it was what you needed: Time to think about your actions and learn a lesson. If ankle bracelets and house arrest are so difficult, what would you suggest as a better punishment?

Using My Time Wisely

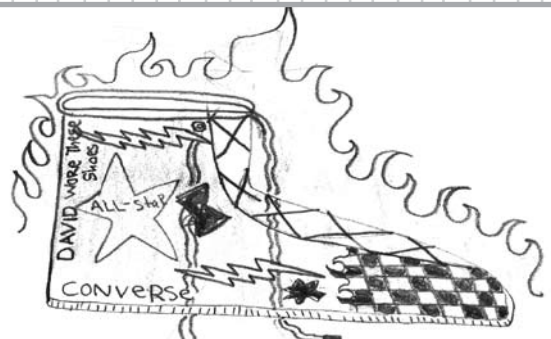
There are many different ways to use your time wisely while you are in Juvenile Hall. My first month I did not really use my time efficiently, I just slept a lot and did not think about my future as much as I do now. I dwelled on the past and just wished I could be on the outs partying with my boys.

That has all changed within the last three weeks. I have accepted that I am locked up and I am not getting out until January fourteenth. Since then I have worked out everyday until the pint my body cannot take any more. I read a lot of books because when I read I feel like I am out of this place and experiencing the world through my mind. I try my hardest at everything I do, and try to absorb all of the programs and take in what the presenter has to say.

I would say the best thing I do on daily basis is not allow myself to sleep during the day. I find that working out hard and depriving your body of sleep will lead to a good night's sleep, and a good night's sleep is the key to completing my time successfully.

-Cameron, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sounds like you have developed a plan that works for you. Your plan for your time inside the hall is a very disciplined one. How do you think this plan will impact your re-entry into your community? What happens when there are not people who are monitoring you? Once you leave, do you think you will be able to maintain a disciplined life style for the sake of your own success in life?



A Letter To My Dark Side

Dark days and stale nights putting up wit' you took all my might you never seen the envy in my eyes was just pride.

I remember days when you would beat me, and mistreat me.

I have a load on my heart that I release.

You were my world, I was you baby girl.

Mommy I never got why you regretted me and wish you never conceived me. I hate my eyes for being so heavy.

I hate that she said she never wanted me,

I was a mistake, I hate feeling this hate so deep, I try to make you happy but all you ever did was step on me. I love you even though it didn't show.

But in me, later along the line, you made them label me mentally.

Believe me I'm sorry for the way you feel about me.

I could, I would have never been conceived.

I still love you Mommy

Yes I Forgive You, Mother

With all these can I be a phenomenal women!... Love, the finest

-Tayana, Alameda

From The Beat: There is so much hurt and love in this poem, we wonder what your mother would think if she saw it. Would you ever consider showing it to her? How do you think she would respond, to these phenomenal girls, written by this phenomenal young woman?



The Staff That Goes Beyond

I want to give a tribute to the Probation of Alameda County Juvenile Hall staff for just supporting me through all the time that I have been in Juvenile Hall.

They really don't have to help is they only here for four things care, custody, and control and 15 minute room check. And the staff goes beyond that just to help us even more in here.

It's been hard for me in here and they took they time to help me and I thank them for that. A lot of staff in here don't take their time to talk to me or let me make a straight through phone call just to see if my dad is going to come visit me even though I know he is going to come visit me.

I really wish I could give back to them. I know that they just want me to get out of Juvenile Hall and make the right choices.

-Christina

From The Beat: It's true, the best way to give back is to move on and live the long, happy, productive life you deserve, full of love and courage. That is the reward your favorite staff are looking for!

Hatred

My hate is what motivate me to do what I need or what I want. My hate is what makes me say forget everybody.

My hate is what I like, at first I wanted to lose my hate and my animosity I have towards people but I don't care of the ways of people. I hate it. I hate people that think they real but fake as could be. I hate people that brag about being so solid but end up at yo' court dates.

When people say or doubt me I hate it, and I make them mad by proving them wrong and by doing something to them.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Man, hate will eat you alive. Why not focus on what you love (your little cousin, your dreams, your hopes) and draw your strength from that instead?

The Best Book I Ever Read

The best book I ever read is called "Convicted in the Womb." This book showed me that our generation takes what we have and still can't be satisfied. We always want more. It also taught me that the misfortune that I thought was so bad that I have to rob and kill and expose other people's lives in danger to get ahead was nothing compared to what my grandparents had to go through.

The most important message it gave me was that struggles are only a minor set back in life and when you can make a positive outcome from the bad things in life throws at you have succeeded as a man.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: Imagine how the writer of this book would feel to hear that he had such an impact on you. Or maybe you don't need to imagine it, because your words are also having an impact on other people, every time someone reads what you wrote in these pages and feels your words!

My Number One Priority

When I'm in my room I think of my family and what they're doing and I get sad and feel myself almost in tears. I think of the reason why I'm here and try to figure out ways so that I won't come back. My number one priority is to stop drinking --that's one of the reasons why I'm in here. Sometimes I think of ways to better myself and keep myself busy when I'm on the outs. When I get out I'm going to finish school and graduate and be a good example on my little sister who seems to be growing up to fast I tell myself I changing and I will change.

-Luthesha

From The Beat: Congratulations! Most people don't even know where to start or how to choose a priority, but you already know what yours is. What is it about drinking that hurt you in the past, and have you found a program that can help you stop? Like AA?

Street Pharm

The best book I read was "Street Pharm". It's about a boy named "Ty" and he a dope dealer who is running his father's business while his father is doing time in the pen.

Ty gets kicked out of school and has to go to a make up school. He meets a girl and everything is going good until he gets shot twice in a drive-by. It almost ended his life.

A guy named, Darkman did and later set him up. Then after the set up Ty goes back to his regular life. Then his very close friend, Sonny gets shot three times and he decides he wants out. I feel for him though.

-Dijun

From The Beat: Do you want out? Who do you feel for? We feel for you too, 'cause we see a smart youngster who should be doing big things in high school. Thanks for the heads up on "Street Pharm"!

What I Do When I'm In This Piece of Shhh

Shhh, it's push ups all day. Every day I read all through the day.

Don't even want to 'cause I can't really do it. But I know if I don't then I'm not gone learn. And I'm not doing shhh else I might learn why I'm in here. I look at movies when I can. Talk on the phone so I won't be mad all the time. I do all I can so I don't think about this place.

-Twin

From The Beat: You may have trouble reading, but you sure do have a way with words: Brutal, honest, and to the point. Yes, it's awful to lose your freedom, but you seem to be making the most of it trying to be positive - pushups, learning to read, talking out your stress... Can you find the same positivity on the outs?

Jailtime Top Ten

- 1.) Reading.
- 2.) Writing.
- 3.) Sleeping.
- 4.) Talking to a counselor.
- 5.) Talking to a friend.
- 6.) Meeting new people.
- 7.) Playing games.
- 8.) Exercising.
- 9.) Think about life and what I'm going to do when you get out.
- 10.) do well in school, learn something.

-Tc

From The Beat: This is definitely looking at the bright side of being in jail. It's almost like you can use that time to relax, recharge, and maybe even re-write your future!

Sorry Isn't Enough

I don't think saying sorry is enough, because I have had said sorry so many times, and it seems like it didn't mean anything. Like say for instance I tell my baby sorry or I apologize all the time and she tell me yeah, whatever, I don't care, it ain't like you gon' stop. "You're gon' continue to do the same shhh anyway, so from my point of view, sorry isn't enough."

-Demarcus

From The Beat: This is a good point, it's like we were saying in discussion: "Sorry isn't something you feel, it's something you do." Have there been times when you were sorry and truly followed through on it by making a change? Or times that you wanted to but just couldn't figure out how?

My Girl, My Ninja

If there was one person I could look up to, it would be my girl. I look up to her a lot, and so does she. If I ever need anything she'll be there for me with open arms. As I will be there for her.

We've been through a lot together in a very short period of time, and I have one other too, it's my potna Moe. He has always been there for me, and I look up to him as an older brother. He's my family, he always helped me stay fitted, put me on the grind, put money in my pocket, help me eat, and I love him for that.

I love both of you - Mari my love, and my ninja Moe.

-Repo

From The Beat: As much as we respect your love for your boy, if he's the one who put you on the grind, he's also one of the people who put you on this dead end path you're now trying to move away from. There are better ways to make your living than on the grind - and you now get a second chance to find them, for yourself and for your baby!

The Middle of Nowhere

What's good Beat? This is Jake coming from Alameda County! Man, I feel stranded. No, I am stranded. I feel like I'm on a deserted island, out in the middle of nowhere. I can't leave, unless someone comes and gets me. There's no way out!

The only difference is that I'm about it, it's the same as being stuck on a lost island. We're all just waiting for camp to come scoop me up. I'm not coming back no back no more, 12 times is enough. I'm so sick of being here! Camp! Come save me and get me off this deserted island! Keep it solid Beat!

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: To take that Island metaphor one step forward - sure, you can get off the island, but then you have to build yourself a home on dry land. If you go back to your old life, won't you be lost at sea? Surrounded by sharks?

Best Book I Ever Read

Involved people of the dead
It instantly captured my attention
And it almost got me in detention
It helped me in times of despair
It took me right into the vampire's lair
There was lots of happy and sad moments
And when it end my mind went dormant
You might think I'm a geek
Because the book is called Cirque Du Freak

-Dark Desire

From The Beat: Vampire books and movies are some of the best: Buffy The Vampire Slayer, Angel, TK hunter, and TK, and, of course, the original Dracula! What do you think it is about these stories that we love so much? The darkness, the glamour, the fantasy?

Back in In It

Well first off I'm back in the hall, boy back in the mess.
They want another placement, I wanna go to Mex
I want something new to put me through a new test
Let me take a minute I wanna hear what you'll suggest

But I'm not really trippin'

I just wanna be free

So I can post up on the block with the rest of my G's

I came back scared with CYA on my min

Paranoia had me trippin' boy what's wrong with my mind?

I need to get myself together it might be time for a change

'Cause coming into the Hall man it's always the same

I'll keep reppin' my set but I need to stay low

Wait to turn 18 then get my show on the road

Back up to Cali(fornia) with a blunt in my mouth

Back on the block with no P-O at my house

So it is what it is, I'm gonna keep on mobbin'

Be cool for a second no more stealin' and robbin'!

.... Psyche! But I do need some time!

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: As always, we admire the artistry of your flow but fear for your future when we read it. When you say you want to go to Mexico, is it because that's your only choice besides placement, or is it because there's something valuable you can get from your time there. And if you're ready to jump right back on the block, aren't you worried about getting caught back up? You don't want to be the best poet in the jailhouse, do you? We see higher things for you.

Stranded In My Room

One day my sister didn't let me come out to go play because she said I was grounded. She told me to go to my room and I couldn't come out of my room. I felt so stranded.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Did you learn from this? We say you didn't, 'cause you are in a worse predicament now, locked up in juvenile.

Expert Tonio

What's up Beat? This Lil' Tonio and another week in the hall is here. Well, my topic today is "who's an expert." Well to keep it lit you do have to have been through something to be an expert on it. You can also become an expert on something by practicing.

Experts are consistent with a particular subject. That's just my opinion on that topic.

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: So tell us, what are you an expert at? Staying cool under pressure, turning stress levels down, what else? And how will that expertise help you on the outs?

She's More Than a Friend

There's this girl that I met that I truly love and adore. She made a powerful impact on me that I couldn't even begin to explain. She has given me so much courage and compliments to make me think twice about life and my future.

I've also did the same thing with her, vice versa. We have worked together enough to both decide around the same time that this isn't the life we should have or deserve to be living. We have so much potential that we're not actually showing. When we first met we were using our knowledge and potential for the wrong purpose - like planning on setting up shop and brain washing people to do dirt for us and making it to the top by criminal-minded thinking.

Well one day we both woke and said this ain't it. Even though it 99.99% of the plan would go right because I admit my baby does have the gift of gab and I have manipulative ways and too much wisdom, one day I would all come to a crashing halt and we would end up back at square one looking like idiots. It wouldn't be a positive outcome especially for her and her little one.

So we decided that instead of using our knowledge, wisdom, gift of gab and manipulative was street wise, why not put it forth a positive side, such as books. She wants to be a registered nurse, I also think she should go to beauty school too because she's very good at doing hair as a side herself.

I also want to be a real estate agent but right now the way it's looking in society that's not an option, so I plan on being an x-ray technician or a fellow staff here at juvenile hall. I also plan on going to barber school to use that a side hustle and in the mean time we have both decided that going to school, getting a job and apartment would be just enough to keep us occupied while we accomplish our goals is the best idea yet.

To make a long story short we made a promise to work with each other and help change our mind frame and to succeed in life. and that's what we're doing and I want to say I love you.

Kamesha, I promise will make it in life, out of struggle to success.

-Domo

From The Beat: This is an incredibly inspiring situation the two of you have put yourselves in. And yes, you have tons of options of positive things you could do to get out of the mess and the system - are you also going to hook up with city programs that can help you find work, loans, school help, and mostly, other individuals who feel the same way you do about kicking the old ways?

Help

I really need help to become a better person in life. I think everybody needs help down the line somewhere, for real. I ask God to help me, and he does, but not the way I want him to. But I have to take it or leave it, so I take whatever he has for me.

Man this time here is hard. I've been in jail for too long. The house that I hit was not really worth this shhh. Two three years in the Y was not it.

I think I'm not getting the right help in here that I need for real though. I miss my mom hella much. Sometimes I cry too hard for God to be doing this to me. This is the worst thing I ever did.

-Al Boo Boo

From The Beat: Crying - that is, expressing your pain - is probably the best and healthiest thing you could be doing. Think of all the violence people commit because it's the only way they know how to deal with your feelings. If you keep writing, keep trying to grow, and keep focusing on the love you have inside, you will come out of this a stronger person.

Stranded

I remember when I was stranded in Castro Valley overnight. It wasn't too long before I was stranded. I went to a party out there and my patna got arrested so I didn't have a ride back. I never go to Castro Valley, so I didn't know any people, and I was hella far from BART. There was no cars or buses in sight so I called a girl. She told me her friend was coming over. So I go to a gas station and I had to walk about 11 miles.

I arrived at her house, we started messing with each other and she gave me a ride home.

-Steven

From The Beat: Good to hear you made it home, with no drama and no troubles. Plus you walked almost a half-marathon!

I Tried To Keep My Distance

What's up with it Beat, this yo' boy Baby Q and I am in Max chilling, Am gonna tell ya'll about my life. I was raised in these Oakland streets, and all I see is gang-banging, drug-dealing and killing.

I tried to keep to my distance but it seemed to find me. I never thought I'd end up in jail, especially for shooting at people.

All my life I try to do right. I surrounded myself with low-lives who really didn't care what happen to them, and that was the biggest mistake of my life, 'cause they're the ones who got me up in here.

I am doing time for one of them, and what's cold is I ain't seen one letter from him or nothing. Now I realize that life is a b..., and I am a little lucky it's my first time, 'cause they're only trying to give me eight years.

Them years is light weight scarin' me, but they can't keep me down, I know a couple of real ninjas whos facing the L (keep yo' heads up) so my time really ain't nothing 'cause I'll do like two years and get out on parole.

Well Beat I just shared some of my life, well I hope you wish me luck.

-Baby Q

From The Beat: As usual, your words put it better than we ever could: lightweight scared, but not letting it get you down. We wish you more than luck, we also wish for you to make this time work for you (writing, reading and self-education, programs, programs!), so you can get out and make a life for yourself.

Two Ways Out But It's A Way To Change

Too many try too hard to make things work
But try too hard until they sensitive feeling get hurt
And half way have luck and think life's a joke
Imagine living without a dad and living with your
momma crazy folks act foolish to even see a open
opportunity

That's callin' your name
But think you're active in the street game
Go around talking that brave talk
And every day have to look over ya' shoulder when you
walk

In a position where the institution gone have you in the
cemetery While the white folks live good every century
This life gone end real soon,

So what you gonna do?
But whatever you do -- don't be no fool.

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: The real question is actually, what are YOU going to do. You have YA to deal with, streets that will call powerfully to you, and fatherlessness on the one side. But then on the other side you have your own talent and will, the support of whichever program you choose to join, and your loved ones. Which side will prove stronger? Don't be no fool!

Loser

I've never been kissed,
So I'm really pissed.
Girls don't like me,
I've got a broken heart inside me.
No one will comfort me,
I've tried and tried.
But the girl is just like,
And it hurts me inside.
I am a loser,
I am also a boozier.
I drink this alcohol,
Just to end up in hell
I'm lazy
I sit on my couch and watch T-V
It rots my brain, now I'm crazy.
I get bored and play Russian Roulette
Now I'm rolling in the daisies

-Kf

From The Beat: We know you have demons inside you that you fight, that make you want to hurt yourself, that make you want to hurt other people - but you also have strength that comes from a. writing b. reading the books you love c. the games you like to play d. continuing to reach out for human connections. It's like D&D - you are given tools to fight your battles. Use them.

A Time I Was Stranded.

A time when I was stranded
me and my homeboy got a stolo
we went to San Pablo.
We got stuck
we was trying to get a new car
popo came .
Two of my homeboys were in the car.
Me and my other homeboy were getting one and got
caught s
o me and my boy got away and we was stuck,
11:30 at night we walked all night
then we found the bus stop.
By the time the bus came it was midnight
then by the glory of God, He let us get on our way home.

-Lil' Haday

From The Beat: Your lucky. We also hope that was the last time you violated another person's property. Did you learn from this poor choice?

What's Up Beat

This Bg talking to ya. I'm 'bout to get out soon to my group home. I'm only gonna do five months, that's good, that ain't nothing. I'm bout to get that group home over with and go to my house.

I'm going to move in with my baby momma and get that probation thing over with too. Then my moms, brothers, sisters, baby momma and me will be happy.

When I'm out the system, I'm 'bout to go to visit my other family in Mexico and I'm gonna bring my baby with me. So my family could see him.

Then I'll go back to the town and leave my baby with my baby momma and then I'm bout to go kick it with the homies, make my money, go buy me something and then buy my baby some clothes and then my baby momma you feel me? I'm out Beat.

-Bg

From The Beat: We hope by the time we see you you will be long gone. You've been waiting and waiting for this day. Best to you in doing a good program. Do it for your baby boy and all your family! We don't want to assume, but how do you plan on making your money? Be smart!

Jail is Sickening

I used my time wisely, 'cause I know that my life will take me to outer space.

They say "The sky is the limit" but I don't think that's true because the sky is a mixture of elements and all things dissipate.

Why do they call this country a democracy when really and truly a totalitarianism because I can't express my feelings to whoever I want to without receiving negative feedback that I have to stomach regardless. I personally think that jail is a waste of time, money and patience. My life is making its way to the garbage can.

Life sucks, well at least while I'm in jail it does. I hate this place and those feelings will never fall. I want to see my family, my associates and my enemies. I come here so much that the staff can't forget me.

I wanna live my life. I'm glad this stuff is almost over. I'm almost grown and I'll be able to live life on my own. I guess I'ma do right but ain't gone never forget the squad 'cause that's fam.

But everything else is in the past unless I see my peeps in college. Rest in Paradise Arman Green. I love you cousin. God bless everyone reading this.

-Nu-nu the System Victim

From The Beat: The painful thing is that you might have to say goodbye to many of the things you've gotten used to in life (even your "squad" if they will lead you back into bad habits) - especially if you want to break out of the system for real. Do you have the strength to do that? What if you made a list of everything -and everyone - in your life that leads you back to jail, and swore to yourself that you'd cut everything leading towards negativity all out. What would happen?

So Stranded

The time I got stranded was August 2, 2007. I was with my boyfriend and we was all the way in Southern California, and me and him got into a argument and he left me out there with no money, no clothes or nothing.

So I had to be strong and prostitute my way back to the Bay Area. It took me 15 minutes to get the money and I was on the last Greyhound to Oakland and I made it there at 5 a.m. Then I got to Oakland and there was nobody their to pick me up so I was walking for 3 and a half hours with nowhere to go and than I was lucky when I got to my grandma's house.

Her door was unlocked for me and I was safe and sound.

-Precious

From The Beat: It's good that this harrowing story ends up on "safe and sound" because you had to go through so much pain to come home. You told us in workshop that he's not your boyfriend anymore. Congratulations on that, you deserve so much better!

Stranded In The Deep South

One day my brother wanted me to go to Louisiana with him on a plane and we did.

I asked him do he no know to get there and he said yes.

The next day we got ready to.

We packed are backpacks and we left to the airport.

We got on the plane for 5:30 (flight) to the next airport it took us three hours to get there.

So we waited for it and it came so we got on it.

It took us five hours to get there.

It took us so long that I started to feel stranded.

Then we got to airport in Louisiana, he looked like he did not no where to start or go.

-Kyndal

From The Beat: Yes it's a long plane ride to Louisiana. Was it worth it? What did you do?

Using Your Time

Using your time in the hall can be easy. All I do is be on my best behavior so that I could get out of this hole.

To make sure I don't come back here I must choose differently who I hang out with and don't hang out in the same places in Oakland.

What I do when I'm locked up is read books, do push-ups, to make time go faster is to do very well so that you can stay out of your room more. The time goes by in a blur.

Listen to your parents, and go to school (every class) to make sure you stay focus on your main goal and that is to never come back here.

So for all you new heads, do not come back here. This is not a cool place to be, trust me. I've been in here four times. It's not that it's hard, it's boring.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: Incarceration is not only boring, but it also cuts you off of your freedom and all the things you love in life, primarily your family. Stay busy and doing a good program! That's the first step!

My Best Book

The best book I ever read was "Lil' Harper: Letters To A Young Black Brother." I read it in juvenile hall like a week ago. When I first came in I started reading the book because it looked like a good book and it helped me through some things too. What made it a good was what the book was telling you. It helped me keep my head up and taught me about life. It talked about staying in school and everything you need to do to stay out of places like this.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Allow this inspirational book to be the turning point in your life around, and you making better choices!

Stranded

I remember when I was living in Sacramento I ran away from my auntie's home and snuck on a Greyhound to Oakland 'cause I was trying to get to my older sister's house.

When I got to her house some people were there and said she had moved out and they didn't know where. I didn't know anybody in Oakland and I needed a place to sleep so I stole a car that I could sleep in.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: That's rough. What came out of this experience? Did you find your sister? Did you get charged for a stoil?

Going To Placement

In two days I'm getting released into a placement. I do not want to go but it's what I got to do to get home, so it looks to me like I'm going.

I thought a lot about runnin' but I don't think I am. The reason is I would come back to the halls and then get sent to another placement farther away from home.

Farther away from home means a less chance of getting a visit, because my mom barely visits me when I'm forty-five minutes away.

Also running would make it a lot longer till I was able to go home. So I decided that I am going to do my time in placement and go back home to a real organized life with my mom.

-White-T

From The Beat: Great choice! Hope you stick to your plans. Stay in touch and share more about your new organized life with mom.

A Positive Incarceration

I use my incarceration. I try to be positive 99%. There's always at least one person who is going to take that last piece of percent.

I feel I'm in the position where I have to knock a person's teeth down his throat then you always go that conscious that be telling you, just be cool, but I'm not always like that so sometimes it's about the way you wanna use yo time.

Feel me?

-Dijun

From The Beat: Keep your hands to yourself and do your p

I Think the System Owes Me An Apology

...even though I did my thang in the city. They are still trying to get me and my bra with kidnapping and first degree robbery. It ain't my fault that white dude didn't know his way from the city to Oakland.

Now ninja's thinking about how life would be outside. Oakland. Hell yeah, I think they owe me an apology, because if it was a black fool that would have called, they wouldn't have given a damn about us, OR that ninja in the city.

Man, this system is and messed up, and the system owe me an apology because this the only way a lil' ninja can come up. If of racial injustice because. If I was white I wouldn't even be in this much punishment and owe me an apology on enforcing the law on ninjas that don't know and owe ninjas apology for not giving a chance you can apologize for not helping out ninjas that are trying to understand.

-Locust

From The Beat: It's often true that the law protects white crime victims much more effectively than black victims, and also comes down harder on blacks than whites. But we're worried when you say you think this is "the only way" a ninja can come up. It may be the one that gets the quickest results, it may be the one you see most on the street, but it's NOT the right way, or the best way, or the only way. To put it another way - if you're caught in a rainstorm, do you waste your time cursing the sky? Or do you open an umbrella? We believe that the programs, schools, and non-profits around Oakland can be your umbrella. But you have to be the one to decide on getting out of the rain! And that's a terrible thing.... It seems sometimes to be about rich victims versus poor victims as well, and that's even more terrible. But you are still responsible for your own life and actions. Did you try to rob this man? Were you aggressive with him? It's not that we think the law should punish you, but we do hope you weren't hurting another human being.

This Time My Time

I use my time by working out for about thirty minutes to an hour.

I also think about what are the things I'm not going to do for me to not comeback.

I also read a lot of books so I can learn how to read Because I am not a reader.

-A New Me

From The Beat: Wish you put your name on this piece. Sounds like you are thinking clearly. Best to you!

Using Your Time Wisely

I think one way to do that is to think about home. Then when you think about home you will miss home and not want to come back, that's what I do.

Another thing is to write or thing of a plan to help you stay out of trouble when you get on the outs.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: Nice. Tell us about home and tell us your plan!

Incarcerated With A Plan

When I'm incarcerated I spend my time reading, working out, and I also write letters. When I get out I don't plan on coming back. In order to do that I can't fall back into the bad habits I use to have.

I plan on going to school, not using any drugs and spend more time with my family, instead of always just roaming around the streets.

I want to have a successful life and in order to do that I have to have a good education and to stay out of trouble, and that's what I plan on doing.

-Ic

From The Beat: Do it! The ball will be in your court, don't throw it away!

Stranded On The Block

A time I felt stranded was when I was on the block in Oakland
too young
wanting to follow my peers and they left me
to go get some weed.

Told me to stay and I had at least 15-20 rocks on me.
Tazz (Police) hit and I was stranded.
That told me something right there.

Sometimes you gotta ride solo and do what you think is best for you.

I got a dope case for that and also a gun charge because I was holding my uncle's gun police made fun of me when I told them I was twelve (years old).

At least two were shocked and so was I
best believe I got a good ass whooping, butt naked, but at least I learned something,
that was never get caught with a mouth full of rocks and don't spit.

Swallow even if it means a trip to the hospital.

Also, Don't follow the decision, make the decision.

-Dijun

From The Beat: You have the skills to get out of the hood, but sadly from what you write you stuck with the hood sickness. What will it take for you to see a better way?

Tribute to a Helpful Counselor

Right now I want to thank my attorney for helping me out in this situation that I am in right now. I would thank him and my PO (John) for helping me out, but I would thank them much more if they helped me get up and out of here and let me go home with my family.

Thank you. Thank God. God is Big.

-Marco

From The Beat: Those working in the system can only do so much. The rest falls on you! Though, it's a good feeling to have an attorney and PO on your side.

Tribute To A Fairfield Counselor

There was this one counselor I knew when I was doing time in the hall up in Fairfield, CA. He always used to tell us that he knew where we coming from 'cause he wasn't a good person (when he was young). He told us he had been locked up before. He said he wasn't trying to glorify the fact that he had been locked up, but he hoped we would take his advice and turned our lives around while we had the chance.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: You remember this person, but did you take his insights and put them to use? Will you?

My Little Cousin

When I was on the outs I would take my little cousin under my wing, just to tell him what's right and help with what ever he need help with.

I take him under my wing, just because he been around me all my life and he listen and understand what I'm sayin' when I say it. and since I'm in here he on the outs. There's no telling what he's doin and probably around the wrong crowd, that's why I can't wait to get out, so I could look after him.

-Marcus

From The Beat: You have to show him what to do, not tell him what to do. And that means if you want to save him from the streets, then you need to save yourself first. And how are you going to do that?

My Time

I mostly read and try to sleep. I try to read. It feels like time goes faster and also sleep when I got time to and also spend time thinking about if I would get out or not. Think of things that I did before I got here that's almost all the things I think about.

While I'm locked up I wish I would get out so I could try to change my life around and not do bad things no more. I wish God hears my words and gives me a chance to go home and change my life around. Thank you.

-Marco

From The Beat: It's out of God's hands and now in the hands of the judge. You allegedly made a poor choice, now the judge listens to your PO's attorney and so forth, hope they too see you deserve another chance. What will you do when freedom calls? What's your plan?

A Knock On The Door

I was in my house, cleaning up my room, about to go outside when I heard a knock on the door, it was my dad. I knew why he was here, to take me to juvenile hall, so I could turn myself in.

I was about to leave out the back door, but the music was up very loud, I was in the kitchen and the living room screen door was open. I couldn't turn the music off because I would have to walk pass the living room door and he would see me so I just opened it and went to turn myself in.

-Lil' Tae

From The Beat: No regrets? Hopefully a good lesson, given you are handling your business and not AWOL.

Tribute To God

You know who my greatest counselor is? God, because he's my judge and my law giver. He don't even work in the system, he not even your public defender he's my judge, my strength and all my authority.

I can only be up in here for so much time, but what can man do to me? It don't matter because I know if I believe & trust in God ...I know he going to save me out my tragedy God.

If you call on God in your distress he will answer you and set you in a large place, so I know God is going set me free, blessing me through his loving kindness and mercy.

I'm grateful to God 'cause I don't know where I be at rite now so God is the one I pay tribute to right now cause I know life is going be way better when I get out.

-Locust

From The Beat: Remember that praying is not enough - if you believe these things in your deepest heart, you will see that prayers mean nothing if they are not accompanied by changing your ways. ... being kind to others, acting in peace not violence, being honest at all times. Faith is like love, we must act on it, not just feel it. Peace.

Future Love

My dream my queen my shining star
I blow kisses to you wherever you are.
My love my soul my future wife
My heart is complete with something nice.
When I came back to jail
You cried me a river
I'll be back baby girl just
Always remember.
Can't wait for you to come back in my
Arms and hold you
Tight my lucky
Charm.

-Weezy

From The Beat: You know what they say, love is something you do, not something you feel. So how are you going to show this girl that you are good for her, and you won't make her cry again?

Six Hours!

Whats up Beat it's your boy Turk. One time I felt stranded. It was me, my ninjas Jimmy and DL. We was in Sacramento and we broke down. We walked for like six hours. That shhh was hella weak.

-Turk

From The Beat: It probably felt weak at the time, but do you remember what you talked about while you were walking? (A lot of people believe that walking brings out the "real" in people when they're talking)

Stripped and Stranded

What's up Beat my stranded was one time my car was stripped one night. The reason why I was stranded because I just fixed my car. I got so mad that I stop going school that day my sart cost so people want to hate on me. Soon I found out who did it I stopped then and when back to school it was done deal. Got all my shhh back. I was so stranded 'cause it cost money to fix it. I had to go buy me a new car so I could put my TV in.

-Phonara

From The Beat: In the short run, the car might seem more important, but just think for a minute how much more you will earn as an adult if you have an education. Getting your high school degree will bring you thousands more legit dollars, and a college degree, over a lifetime, could bring you millions of legit dollars. That's worth more than a TV, no?

Props to Ms. Felix

I want to start off by saying a lot of the counselors I have met ain't cool, except for ms. Felix.
She is the only person in here that has noticed I was mad and took the time out to talk to me and calm me down. She really care about the people that are in here. All the other counselors be high-powered-fakin'. They act like they care but really they are just here for the money. So with that being said, thank you Ms Felix and when I make it I ain't gon forget about you.

-Loe

From The Beat: We love that you write "When I make it..." because of course the greatest thanks you could ever give Ms. Felix, or anyone that cares about you, is to be safe and successful!

Using Your Time

I use my time reading books, writing letters to my mom, sisters, cousins, and friends, sometime sleeping, doin push ups, sit ups. I watch T.V, use the phone, and play games or just talk to my inmates. I play basketball at rec. at night I sit in my room and pray to God sometimes, but I need to all the time.

-D

From The Beat: Don't worry - every time you do something positive, every time you do something good for another person, every time you try express your love to people who care about you, you are "praying." Because what could be holier than bringing peace!

Life To Me

Life to me is like a journey. You only have one so you should live it to the fullest. There's choices you need to make to be able to be the person you want to be.

Sometimes I just feel like saying screw life, because of all the shhh I been through. It's hard to get up in the morning and go through another day. When I make choices in my life they're not always that great.

But then when I think of it I really do need to start making better choices, because I don't want to end up like my mom, with nothing. To me money is everything, and I like to make it the fast way, but I can't do that forever.

So now that I'm thinking for my future I'm going to make the right decisions, continue going to school to get a good job -- and be making that big money.

-Tinawina

From The Beat: The thing about fast money is that it's easy come easy go - but when you earn your money legit, you tend to be smarter about spending it. Have you talked to your PO about help getting a job, and getting support to keep you positive out there (remember - that's your PO's real job, to help you get on your feet!)

What Helps

I use my time by paying attention to what the guest and staff talk about... It might not help in here but it helps on da outs...

I read books that talk about life in the streets so I won't go back out and do the same things to end up like the person in the book.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: What kinds of things do the books suggest you do INSTEAD of the mistakes? And are those steps you could follow on the outs?

The Best Book I Ever Read

The best book I ever read was papa don't preach by Thomas lave. The book was cool because it was related to the way of life in the streets of Oakland and every other city. The book talked about gangs, drugs, killing and that's everywhere today in our cities.

-Davonte

From The Beat: Did the book end on a message of hope - with a blueprint for how someone like you might be able to have a better life, despite all the problems?

Six Days Stranded

The only time I felt stranded is when I ran from my group home, me and my bra. We walked in Chino Hills for like 30 hours, and then we stopped at this little factory. A man came over and asked did we need some help to find where Greyhound was. Then he said wait.

Then when he came back he asked us if we wanna help him move these boxes for \$20 each and he would give us a ride to the nearest Greyhound station. He drove us to the station and the police was at the station and we didn't have enough money.

Then this lady came and gave us our bus tickets so we took the bus to downtown L.A.

But to make a long story short, I was stranded out there for 6 days.

-Kevin

From The Beat: It's a trip how, when we are stuck and alone, people can sometimes come out of nowhere and help us - like the man who gave you a chance to work, and the woman who helped you with tickets. There are so many dark stories coming out of the system, thank you for brightening us up with a good one!

Stranded in San Francisco

I was stranded in San Francisco at my grandma's house when my cousin and me got arrested. He got dropped off at home and I got taken to Balboa Police Station. I was stranded for six hours waiting from someone to pick me up. I didn't get picked up until four in the morning.

It sucks to be around so many policemen and not being able to do anything. After, I was pissed. They had no right to keep me, so I started to wild out and was handcuffed and put in a holding tank.

After getting home at five a-m my dad took my phone so I left to my brothers and haven't been back since, but I do talk to my dad.

-James

From The Beat: We're glad you still talk to your dad. Maybe he took your phone because he loves you and wants to cut off your connection to danger. Would you move back in with him when you get out?

Using Your Time and Being Fine

Using your time and being fine.

Using your time to be in that good first line of school.

Using your time to be yourself.

Using your time to watch T-V

Using your time to sleep, to talk, to play games

Using your time to walk

Using your time to choose the right thing to do.

Using your time is what do you do

Or what can you do to use your time wisely --

To better yourself and to grow

So that you never have to return to incarceration.

-Lil' Low Low

From The Beat: We don't know if you intended this to be a poem, but it sure felt like one when we read it, which is why we broke it up into lines. Especially because of the end - now we ask you, how will you defeat that return to incarceration that so many people suffer?

Best Book

The best book I ever read was the first book I ever read. Which was called "Too Beautiful For Words." I read it the first time I ever came to jail, and really connected to it, and I couldn't put it down. It was really good!

-Tinawina

From The Beat: It's a great book, based on a great song, and that song was written by Boots Riley of The Coup, one of Oakland's best underground hip-hop acts! Check them out when you can and tell The Beat what you think!

Miss Shepard: A Helpful Staff

A helpful counselor to me is Miss Shepherd. She always takes her time to talk to me even though I cuss her out one or two times. She always has been my favorite staff 'cause she is straight-forward and speaks her mind.

She also takes time to talk to some of us about stuff others wouldn't. She's very trust worthy, she's one of my favorite staff.

A shout out to Miss Loudermilk, Miss Shaffel, Miss Belton, Miss Chatfield, and Miss Cobwell, and many more.

-Lil' Walker

From The Beat: We're sure the staff will appreciate knowing that they're appreciated, and hopefully that they've also made a difference in your life. What have you learned from them that you can take with you when you leave?

Family First

Well I'm back in the Hall. I was just on the run so I'd like to write about that. Here we go.

You feel me, being on the run ain't cool. I ran from this group home and while I was on the run I couldn't live at home 'cause if the police caught me at the house, me and my mama would of both went to jail. You feel me, my mama would of caught a case, and I wasn't about to let that happen. She got a family to support.

So I had to be with the homies all the time. It as all good for a week 'cause they had missed me while I was locked down. But after all the catching up was over, them fake ninjas didn't really want me around 'cause they knew I had to go to one of their houses at the end of the night.

Plus I fell off with the cash so I had no money, I really found out who were my real friends. Well them ninjas I grew up with, so they were supposed to be like brothers. But they showed me their true colors. Being on the run really woke my game up -- it showed me that my real family the only ones who truly give a damn. So to all my ninjas out there that think this ninja's your friends, they ain't, they end up being your enemy.

Family first.

-Lil' Walt

From The Beat: As much as jail can be hard, we're relieved to hear that now you are in a position where you have a place to sleep every night. Plus you're not looking over your shoulder anymore. And yes, the love of your family is much more solid than the love of people who are with you for the fun but not for the hard times! A note of compassion for your friends though - it's really hard to be there for someone else when you are also messing up. Maybe it's not that they're fake, it's just that they're struggling as well!

Sellin' You Dreams

What's Up Beat?! I'm hella tired of being in here man. I've been in here for a month and that's not long, but it is for my first time being in here.

I was told I was suppose to been out. All they do is sell you dreams. That shhh ain't coo'.

People playing with yo' freedom and yo' life. If they ain't gon' let you out, at least they should be straight up with you. on mommas. I'm suppose to be going to camp so I ain't gone.

It seems like everybody is lying to me. PO, Judge, lawyer, and DA. Everybody woofing. They think they helping you but they really just building up anger inside of us.

-El

From The Beat: Camp will be a lot better - you'll see. More freedom, more programs, and more help getting your life straight so that you can get out and stay out. We'll see you up there!

"God Gave Us Feet"

I remember one time I was stranded in Hayward, me and my friend. We had went out there with some boys, and we didn't what they were up to. We were really high off a lot of weed and they thought we was going to have sex with them in this like deserted place, and I really didn't even know them like that.

My patna said "God gave us feet to walk and we will use them to get home" So they left us there. We were hella far away, with a whole pack of cigarettes and we were worried about how we were going to get home. We walked pass a car dealership place and seen a car with the lights on, we both looked at each other and I asked her did she know how to drive.

We got in the car and it must have been started cause when she tried to start it, it made this funny noise, and we skirted off.

-B

From The Beat: Maybe that was God's way of telling you "Hey, I gave you feet, but I didn't give you no car!" We're glad you made it home, and glad you left those boys before things got out of hand.

This Life

What's crankin' Beat Within. This ya' boy Dots from the max unit. Today I chose to write about the gangster life. I chose to write about this because I'm a gangster myself. Is cool being in a gang, 'cause you get respect, protection, money, love.

The bad part is that you get enemies too. What I think about what get out of a gang is catching 15 with an L in prison if you lucky or the grave yard. I been close to been 6 feet under ground. But Diosito (God) was there to help me.

But he put me in this place to learn some. I'm one of them lucky ones that get to go to jail instead of the cemetery. I been four month in the hall and three of my homies have got shot and one stabbed.

It's no joke bein' in a gang. It's ride or die out there. Now homeboy, Dots got to do two years but yeah now to me it is nada. RIP fallen homies. Stay strong to everybody doing time.

-Dots

From The Beat: During these two years, you are going to have a lot of decisions to make. Mostly, weighting the good and the bad of gang life and asking yourself if this is the future you see for yourself. Remember that you and your young homies are often being used by the older homies to do their dirty work for them. Sort of like the young soldiers in Iraq. These "leaders" demanding your loyalty - are they truly people you can trust, people who care about your life, your loved ones, your future?

My Time Changes

Using my time in the hall really does depend on how my day is going. Usually I read or write in my journal. I write about my plans and future goals I want to accomplish when I get out, this is usually when I'm having a good day.

When I'm sad or missing my family I usually am very quiet and keep to myself through out the day. If it is a really horrible day, I stay in my room all day and later in the day I try to talk to a "helpful counselor". Then there's the day where I'm just very goofy and playful to the point where I forget I'm in jail. LOL.

It's crazy how I use my time. I also have my relax day, where I just sleep and sleep until it's time to get up.

-Tiara

From The Beat: It sounds as if this time in the Hall is helping you learn how to manage your emotions and plans. Do you think that you can use some of these skills to be on an even keel once you get out?

Look Into My Eyes

Look into my eyes

Can you see the pain and suffering? No you only see
What's on the outside the hazel which you find to
Be pretty,

Listen to my voice

Can you hear the anguish and the obscurity? No you
Only describe my voice as what you would call
Deep or sexy.

Look at my muscles

Can you see the tension and the scars that are
Indelible? No you see a six-pack which to you is
Desirable.

Listen to my thoughts

Can you hear the anger and sadness that has
Filled my heart? No you only hear the mouthpiece
In which you see a brand new start.

Look into my eyes

Now do you see the real me or do you see what you
Saw before? Look a little bit harder can you see
What I really yearn?

There's more

To accept than just outside, and on the inside
Be a creature.

- Steven

From The Beat: When we look into your eyes, or your soul through this poem, we see all the things you ask us to. Your humanity, your truth, your essential worth. We see it because you showed it to us. So now you must ask yourself why you only show that side of yourself sometimes. Where are the places, times, and people that you feel you can truly show yourself? Those are the situations to grab on to, if you can.

What My Counselors Told Me

The counselors that helped me is DB, Miss Elsie, Ms. Wadud, Ms Godfrey, Tafoya, Miss P. The staff I named, they tried to tell me to stop coming here and everything they told me I should have listened now I'm in Max about to get sent to who knows where.

-Young Wash

From The Beat: It's not to late, is it? What kind of advice have they given you recently and about your life? Is it advice you can follow in the future?

Best Book: The Bible!

The best book I ever read was The Bible. I read the bible every day because it teaches me a lot on how to live and do better in life; also makes me a better man then who I am.

By me reading The Bible so far it have got through a lot like getting me out of big trouble, keeping me alive and keeping my love ones a live longer than they should have that's a true blessing from God believe it or not.

If you follow the direction of The Bible and God's plan you should go to heaven and not hell. Your life will be so much better and you will feel so much better like a new person. Things that you wish for, what ever, or need just believe and pray faithful and ask God and you should have it if you is a true witness of God.

-Daniel

From The Beat: There is an expression that you've probably heard, which is "What would Jesus do?" If you applied that to your own life, asking yourself how he would behave in certain situations, what sorts of actions of yours would change? What would stay the same?

Best Book: The Pact

The best book I had read is called "The Pact." I had read it the second week that I was in the hall. I read that book because it was about three young men that had made a pact in middle school to become doctors.

What had made it so good was that the young men was just like me and my patnas. They went to juvy, and grew up in a rough neighborhood. What it had taught me was that anything is possible, no matter where you are living at. The young men lived around by each other, but didn't meet until middle school.

They made the pact to be doctors and through the times one of them said they was not going to do it anymore, and the other two struck by his side helped him out and got him through his troubles, and he continued and they all three became doctors. What this book meant to me was don't quit because you think you can't do it just try harder and do it, 'cause you can do anything you put your mind to.

-Russell

From The Beat: Thanks for the book review Russell. The Pact is a Beat favorite. Can you think of two friends you could see yourself making a pact like that with? And if so, what is the profession you would dream of being successful at?

The Coldest Winter Ever

One of the best books I ever read is called "The Coldest Winter Ever" by Sistah Souljah. I read this book last time I was in Juvenile Hall. This book taught me that even though my life is easy, there are tons of minors out there that have to make it on their own through tough times.

I think that this book was so good because it showed how the main character (Winter) struggled to make it in the streets on her own. The book begins when Winter is living with her parents and little sisters in Brooklyn, New York.

Her family was very wealthy due to her fathers drug hustle. Everything suddenly went chaotic when her father got busted and hauled off to prison. Everything was took from them, their house, cars, and all their possessions. Her mother had a new drug habit so her little sisters got lost in the system.

The rest of the book gives an inside look on how she had to make her own way, hustling in every way she can. I really enjoyed this book.

-Lil' Convict

From The Beat: Your writing on this was so good that it really made us want to read the book - we want to know what happens to Winter and how she gets out of trouble! With writing this good, have you ever thought of writing a book of your own?

Stranded

Lost stranded on an imaginary Island.

But this Island is in my mind.

Drifting away from the world slowly.

As I watch my dreams go away

I listen to the sounds of the people around move on.

I sit and think how can I move wit' them?

How can I get them to help me?

No one wants to teach me or help.

I call and no one answers.

I look again and no one's there.

I talk and no one's there.

I go gone. But I don't care no' mo.

-Surez

From The Beat: If you are on an island, then this poem is like a message in a bottle, thrown out to reach others and let them know who you are and how you feel. So long as you continue to throw us those bottles, we will be here to catch them and carry your message in our pages. We hear you, and so do all the readers!

What this book meant to me was don't quit because you think you can't do it just try harder and do it, 'cause you can do anything you put your mind to.

Married To The Game

The best book I ever read is called, "Married To The Game." I read it at home because my teacher wanted us to pick a book and read it. It really didn't teach me anything. I only picked that book because of the cover. It had a woman in a white dress with a gun.

The book was about this lady, and she was a stripper. In the beginning of the book she was just getting out of jail because she took the blame for something her dude did.

When she walked in the house she found him and the maid in the hot tub and she killed both of 'em. Later on in the story she starts messing with her dude's brother and she gets both of them caught up and at the end the brothers killed each other and she got away with a suitcase full of money. This was the first book I ever really read and I really was into the story.

-Reyna

From The Beat: It sounds like the book DID teach you something, which is that reading can take you away to another world and get you "into the story." And now that you've shared it with The Beat, you've gotten US into the story!

What's Cold

Let me tell you about my visit that was nothing nice,

My mamma telling me over the glass window
someone took my cousin life.

They did him wrong gave him one to the head,
Sitting in my room, thinking it should have been me
instead.

What's cold is I ain't gonna get to bury him.
I can't believe I am going through all this shhh again.
So I say rest in peace to my love ones, why it happen to
you?

Didn't none of them get to see the age of twenty-two.
Now I got no option but to get out and put in work,
And I ain't gonna stop

I'd rather do my time in a casket, than to come back to
jail.

Because if I do come back I'll be facing the L.
I just can't let this slide,
but at the same time I ain't trying to earn another stripe.
In the end I will make the right call, because I don't want
to spend my life in jail looking at the same filthy walls.
(Rest in Paradise Thomas Melero-Smith)

-Baby Q, Alameda

From The Beat: In the name of your cousin, RIP, do not be a fool young man! We see a person who could be a true leader for positive change. We see college, we see a hard uphill struggle, we see you filing paperwork, walking with a backpack full of books. We see you getting a college diploma, wearing one of those funny graduation hats. One day we see you even coming as a guest to Juvenile Hall, to tell the young people what you came from and how you got free. That seems to make more sense! Do it for family!

Two Lives Lost

Get the gun, now I'm sprung
Bust a head so I run
Police on my trail but I shall not fail
I'm too smart to go to jail
So I throw the gun
Now that was dumb

Dey pick it up and now I'm down for murdering someone
25 to life wit' no type of wife to come see a ninja on
visiting night
Now is that right?
Mook walk around and ask about me
I fear God but scared of no man
This JJC shhh is so-so can
I'm not coming back and that's a fact!

-Mookey

From The Beat: If what you've written here is true, you've basically taken two lives — that of the person you shot and your own! Not to mention the endless pain those who love you both will have to carry to their graves. What a tragedy for so many! When you say you fear God, what is it you fear exactly? How do you deal with this fear, and does it ever cause you to change anything about how you think or act?

I Miss

Man, I miss the block, and I miss the wife. I say I miss the block 'cause I ain't used to bein' away for this long. Every time I call the homies, I'm like, "What's good wit' ninjas?" They be like, "We waitin' for you to come home, 'cause you the last locked up."

But another thang is too many of the homies getting hit. I ain't feelin' dat shhh, man. I feel useless 'cause I'm in here. Two days after I came in here, my big bra got out, but he bounced back on these suckas. Now the last couple weeks like three of the homies got hit and two died. I'm hot 'cause ain't none of dem getting touch.

But it's coo' 'cause they can't hold me for too long. They gotta let me go.

-Mx

From The Beat: It's as clear to us (as it's unclear to you) that if you think you've been away from the block a long time, you're in for some rough going since you seem bound and determined to come back in for much, much longer. We don't know what you're here for, so we don't know how long they can hold you. But we know the system, and we know that if you do some things, they can hold you for a very long time — right up to forever. We hope it doesn't come to that, but unless you do some thinking on a new level, you're practically writing your own ticket back.

Stranded

I feel stranded right now, I don't know how to get out of the halls. My PO tryin' to keep me from seeing the outs again. I'm really stressed out right now 'cause my life is on pause right now, waiting for someone to put out a helping hand.

-B

From The Beat: One thing for sure, your PO cannot keep you from seeing the outs again. It may take longer than you hope for, but you will get out. So our question is, when you do get out, how will you keep yourself out so that you won't have to blame your PO for keeping you in?

So Tired

I'm getting tired of a lot of stuff. I'm gettin' tired of wakin' up in jail. I'm gettin' tired of bein' in jail. I'm gettin' tired of wearing the same clothes. I'm gettin' tired of people telling me what to do. I'm gettin' tired of my PO trying to play me up here. I'm gettin' tired of these lil' boys thinking they tough up here but they not tough. Holla at ya boy.

-Fat T

From The Beat: Now that you're out of here, we hope that you're tired enough that you'll never come back! We're watchin' for that.

Why Keep On

Man, I been coming to this hole for three years. Now I'm a bout to move to the next house before the big house. When I think about why I get up every day, I can't find a reason why I do. I don't even have a reason to live and I really don't want to live no more.

-Gues

From The Beat: We cannot supply you a reason to live, except for this: You are alive, and that is reason enough to live. Whether you can find the reason for your life at this moment or not, there IS a reason for it. Perhaps finding that reason is the reason itself. Whatever you're feeling at this moment, just remember that it is only this moment, and that nobody can predict the next corner or what's around it.

Stranded

Well, I felt stranded when I was in jail for about five months. I really was feeling down and stressed out and really it felt like there was no way of getting out of this jail hole. I mean I didn't get no visit, no letters no nothing. I mean it was really hard on me and still I feel this way, so I'ma change and change my mindset and do better in life.

-Unknown

From The Beat: The only problem we have with this piece, Mr. Unknown, is that you write "I'ma change and change my mindset" as if that is something put off for a future date. What's keeping you from making those changes right now?

Still Here

What it do? It's yo' boy Young Illy, but that name is played out. I'm gone change my name to the President 'cause Illy, he don't come heard enough for The Beat.

So I'm gone let y'all hear something new.

The game is true

You live life one day and you can get shot
On a flot.

We got some people who bang red and blue.

But have one of your family members got killed and you didn't know what to do?

This beef shhh true...

One mo' thang... don't bend down when you tie yo' shoe.

-The President

From The Beat: Well, Mr. President, you've given us a surface description of "the game" in a flow. But we wish you'd get under the surface and tell us what you know. Whether you bend down or not, the system's got you in a lock. It seems to us that you're running towards a dead-end, as if in a race. But what we want to know is, can you put your mind in a different space?

Using My Time

What's good with The Beat? Me, chillin', doin' it extra big, ya heard. I use my time in here wisely doing positive things. Such things as exercise for number one and read, watch movie videos, regular videos, and do a lot of thinking. And all the shhh that I just named got me and sill gettin' me to do my time, ya heard.

But ya boy AFB do anything to make the time go faster. Don't matter what it is. The time that I'm doing I take this as a lesson for all the other things that I did in life and never got caught. So I'm doing all that time right now. Get back at chu boy boy, boy.

-Young Bundy

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the phrase, "Poetic Justice?" It's something like karma. It means that if you're here for something you didn't do, but you got away with things you did do, that's "Poetic Justice." We don't know if this can be called justice at all, but if you are doing all the things you write about here, then maybe you can turn karma in a different direction in your future. We hope so.

Stranded

I feel stranded being in jail because I can't get the hell out without going to a group home and that's phony as hell. I don't want to go at all to no damn group home, because that's still being locked up to me. And especially since my punk PO trying to send me to ROP. They can put their hands on you, and if they try to do that, I'ma blow back. But I ain't goin', no matter what. They can't make me. I rather do my year in juvenile or the Ranch, cha heard?

-Mike

From The Beat: In some ways, it sounds like you are stranded more in your thinking than in your placement. Because of your own decisions, there are going to be a lot of things you don't want to do, including some they can make you do whether you want to or not (like being locked up). Instead of focusing so much anger on what "they" are doing to you, it's time to think a little more about what you are doing to you — and what you can do to remove yourself (even if little by little) from the control of strangers you don't like.

Can't Breathe

Ay, tha system tryna rate me on a one-ta-five scale
I hate juvenile 'cause you can never place a bail
But I don't care 'cause ma life is going straight ta hell
After them eight foul shots an' them thirty points scored
Tha narcs gone be on me like some prostitution whores
PO be on my line so tough till I can't breath
But it's good... I'ma knock it out for now
Stay up for then stay about
In a few minutes I'ma be out

-Jabba

From The Beat: You say you hate it here, but your actions are almost guaranteed to put you here, so how much could you really hate it? If you "can't breathe," maybe you should take a good look at how scoring pounds can put the strangle hold on yourself. If this is "good," then what's bad?

A Ta All Dese Females

Ah put cha picture on ma mirror
Start ta blush when somebody says ya name
Now ma stomach is in pain
I see ya walkin' my direction... don't go thee other way
I start ta stutter when ya speed got me trippin' and ma
knees so weak
Ay, check me out, ay what's happening ta me
I need a angel ta come rescue me!
Ay, holla at me. I'ma be out in a few minutes

-Jabba

From The Beat: We hope that when you get out, you don't just put yourself back in the box where you have think about those girls you can't be with...

Stranded

I'm stranded in juvenile. I'm in here every day, doing the same stuff, bored. I don't like eating the nasty food. It's really stressful being in here, thinking about all the stuff you could've did and couldn't do to get in here.

Sometimes when I go to my room and go to sleep, I dream about being home. Then I wake up in here. Yeah, I miss my moms an' stuff, but they trying to send me somewhere I don't want to go and that's gone make everything worse. I think about that every day. That's why I say being in juvenile is stressful.

-P

From The Beat: Sometimes, it takes hard lessons to make the difficult move from childhood to young adulthood. One of those lessons is that the time to think about the things you're now thinking about every day is before you do the things that lead to places like this, and not afterwards. But at the same time, thinking is always a good thing, so even if it's come late, we're glad you're thinking.

Using Your Time

The way I use my time in here is just write letters all day, read hella books, and go to hella Omega classes. I think them classes really helped me a lot. I just wanna say thanks to all the grown ups that come out and talk to us. I really appreciated it. Thanks a lot again.

-Darrin

From The Beat: You're doing what you need to do to find another way so that you don't have to repeat this sad experience. Good for you. Keep reading and keep going to Omega. And, of course, keep writing.

Missing Family

I'm stuck here in San Francisco in the juvenile hall hopin' I'll get out tomorrow during court. If I don't, I feel like I'll go crazy 'cause I've never been in this kind of trouble in my life. I really miss my grandma and my grandpa and my lil' bro.

I shouldn't have came on this stupid trip. I live in Oregon and have no family out here in California. I got forced to come by a 22-year-old guy that's my bro's ex friend. My bro's in here with me. My older bro misses family too.

Me and my bro got forced to do bad things that we didn't want to do, and next thing you know I'm here in the San Francisco juvenile hall. I really hope that I get to go home soon. I really miss my family. Not being able to see them makes me go crazy in the head. I hope that changes soon though.

-Bobby

From The Beat: We hope you get reunited with your family soon, too, because we know how stressful it is to be in here and so far from family at the same time. At the same time, we wonder how two young men like you and your brother could be "forced to do bad things" that you didn't want to do. Of course, we weren't there and don't know the details, but without incriminating yourself in print, it might be worth examining your own choices and therefore your own responsibility for being where you are.

Doin' Time

What 'sup Beat? It's ya boy young Kada. I'm doing hella time for a violation but, yeah, doing the time is good because you get yo' weight back and doing things you can't do on the outs. Naw, I'm just playing.

You can do more stuff on the outs. I hate doing time because I been up in here thinking about what I'm gone do when I get out. I be out soon. For everybody doing time, keep y'all head up. But the haters I'm not talking about y'all so just fall back!

Holla back Beat.

-Young K

From The Beat: So, when you think about what you're going to do when you get out, what comes to your mind? Will you make the changes you know you need to make in order to stay out of here, or will you be one of those return visitors? We hope you hate being here enough that you'll never be back!

Stranded

(I was stranded) when I was supposed to get a ride to Great America. They end up calling five hours later that, "We are sorry that we couldn't pick you up because we had car problems."

-German

From The Beat: This is another example of being able to write only two sentences because you wrote about too many topics. For example, if you wrote about this topic only, you could have told us why they waited five hours to call you, or whether you ever got to Great America. Also, whether leaving you stranded like that affected your relationship with them. (And who "they" are.) There are many details you can put in a piece, but only if you focus on one topic only. Next time...

Truly Remorseful

I work like the Russian and Japanese crews
PO said I gotta get a 98, told her I got one to see another day

But the system tryna play me and ruin ma life
I don't think I'll ever get out just to see the bright light
In the meantime, I'm in Unit-2 holdin' it down

Until I get out to familiar grounds
I'ma be gone for a year, they tryna send me out the state
Can't wait 'til I get back just to reclaim my place
I know I did wrong and yes I'm truly remorseful
I had ma mom's stressing that was on my conscience
I told her I'ma do good, but I ended back in the halls
Call her every night, then it's back to six walls

For now I'm out
For you stay about
I love you "killah moms"

-Jabba

From The Beat: What is the place you can't wait to get and reclaim?/Will it just bring you more of the same?/How many tears will your mom have to cry/Before you can answer the question, "Why?"/We don't know what you mean by the Russian or Japanese crew/But the real question we have is who's playing who?

Using Your Time

I feel like I will use my time incarcerated by trying to think smarter and make better decisions for myself. Also I will not be sleeping in the cell until it's really time, but until then, I would read a book to get smarter and use my time getting my body in shape. I would try harder not to come back to jail.

-Xavier

From The Beat: Tell us some of those "better decisions" you're thinking about making in your life.

This Time A Plan

What's good wit' da Beat? Dis yo' boy Poon G aka YPG. Yeah man, just lettin' you know dat yo' man's 'bout to step up out dis thang, an' I'm go stay out. I'm not just sayin' dat. I got a plan, something I didn't have last time.

But to all, keep ya head up. I'm out.

-Ypg

From The Beat: We wish you had shared a little of your plan with our Beat readers. Whatever it is, we hope it works to keep you out of here. Good luck.

My Ex

Well, for starters, I hate that I'm in here right now. Basically, I'm in here for no reason but a warrant, but dat might be a little too much information, so I'ma start wit' something else, like maybe how much I miss my ex-boyfriend.

We broke up recently and I miss him so much, because I really was in love with him. Two days before I came in here, he was mad dat I got a new man. But what I don't understand, why he would be so mad and he left me with nothing. But he know I'ma always get back up. But, anyways, he got mad and socked me in my eye, and when I came in here, my eye turned kinda black. I was mad at him, but I still got love for him, though!

-Cindy

From The Beat: "No reason but a warrant" is a reason, and it's the kind of reason we find the hardest to understand since it puts the responsibility squarely on your own shoulders. But since you're here living with the consequences of that responsibility, we guess you already know that. We understand how hard it is to give up on love, but at the same time, any male who hits his girl is no man at all, but still a boy acting like a boy. Yes, get back up and move on.

Getting Help In Here

The nurse helped because when I first got here, she gave me a Motrin because I had back pain. And she gave me a ice pack for the selling. That is how a person from the system helped me.

-German

From The Beat: We wish you had written more about this nurse and also about why you have back pain. You wrote about four different topics, but when you do that, you don't have time to write much about any one of them. So next time, please choose only one topic, and give us a lot more about it.

Really Tryin'

'Sup Beat Within? A while since I wrote to y'all. But I'm back.

This is ma 6th time in here. And I know it is the last time because I'ma turn 18 in somethin' months. So if I do get caught up again, I'm going to 850. But I'm not trying to get caught up again. This time I'ma really try to stay in school and calm my life down a little bit. So yeah, I'ma write lata. Peace.

-Lil' Roach

From The Beat: We really hope you can keep to your plan to calm down and go to school. It must be very tiring to come back to this same situation six different times! This doesn't have to be the last time you write for The Beat (which you can do from anywhere at any time), but make it the last time you write anything from behind locked doors!

They Yo' Daddy

Wassup with The Beat? This be ya boy CB. But wassup? Man, I been here for a minute. But feel me I'm 'bout to get out soon and make my dough back and never come back here. It ain't good in this hole. But feel me, if you ever get out, don't never come back. Staff be thinking they yo' daddy in here. But feel me, I'm out.

-Chris

From The Beat: If you think you can go out and "make your dough back" without facing the same consequences as before, then you've got some serious growing up to do. Just announcing that you're never coming back isn't enough. We've read that announcement too many times to believe it, unless there's some determination to change your act that goes with it.

Creative Games

What I do to make my day go by fast in my room is make a yarn ball and play catch in my room. Or play volleyball with my roommate. Other than that, I shoot dice that I make outta bread, or toilet paper.

-Froggy

From The Beat: What we like about this short piece is it shows us that you have creative and artistic ability. If you can make dice out of bread or toilet paper, you can probably make all kinds of things when you're on the outs so that you stay too busy to let yourself get back into this place.

Shout Out To Counselors

I definitely got a best counselor during my longest stay here. I had Mr. Chin, the buffest Asian I ever met, and Mr. Locks, that one cool white guy. They be giving me knowledge. And plus knowledge, I got Mr. Kurt, Uncle Will and... oh yeah, I can't forget about Mr. Gibson. These the staff that I really appreciate and they are here for the kids. Oh yeah, Young B. 'Bout time this is published, I will be in ROP.

-Money Earnin' Vernon

From The Beat: It's nice to appreciate those that help us along the way. We hope you do well in ROP, and come back better able to stay out of the system for good.

Who am I

Who am I?
I'm J-Citi from San Francisco
How old am I?
17 years old
What I'm about
All about getting goin'
Where I want to go
I want to go to the stars

-J-Citi

From The Beat: Wanting to go to the stars is not the same as getting there. What's your plan for getting from here to there, and how will you avoid falling deeper into this hole in your effort?

Making Things Way Better

I would like to use my time knowing that I could be doing way much better, and that I couldn't believe that I'm in a prison. This is the last place. I would rather do thing outside instead of being in here.

I miss my mother and all that I would do thing in order to stay out of this place. I like to spend time reading comic books and let the time pass by.

Man now I know what it is to be in jail instead of being outside and all that. I just figured that the more I spend in my cell the more I go insane, but if I'm outside and helping out, it'll make thing way much better.

-David

From The Beat: Is this your first experience being taken from your family and locked up? If so, maybe you have learned an important lesson about thinking before acting, and considering the consequences. What will you change when you get out of here about how you live your life so that you never have to experience this again?

Stranded

Man I'm stranded. Can't go nowhere. Posted in da halls. This the last place I'm tryna be, for real. Man it ain't nothin' I could do to get up out this joint.

On some real shhh, I wanna go to da house and be with moms, sis and lil' bra. But real talk, we all say that but we keep comin' back. It ain't nobody in this unit 1st time in here, but everybody want to go home. Ninjas lyin' like a motha 'cause we stranded in here.

-Cal

From The Beat: You say there's nothing you can do to get out of here, but there were things you could have done (or not have done) to stay out of here to begin with. Any chance you'll figure it out so that next time you leave this place, you can stay home with your moms, sis and lil' bra?

Living My Life

Hi. My name is Banana. I am so mad that I did not get out today, 9/4/07. Now I am sitting here, thinking about you every day and night. I can't wait and be told I can go home. Man, I hate my PO so much. I miss my man. I can't wait to see him when I get out of here, so I can go back to school and get a job. I am locked up and I don't know what to do, but am coo' up in here in Unit 5.

Oh yeah, I got shot three times—one in the back and one in the hand and in the leg, but I am still here, living my life. I love my haters, yes, I do. Keep yo' haters with you. Well, I got to go back to my room. Yeah, see my ninjas when I get out.

-Banana

From The Beat: Here's the deal, Banana. If any of those three shots had been just a little one direction or another, you wouldn't be around to say, "Oh yea, I got shot three times..." (Or maybe you'd be around, but confined to a wheelchair and dependent on someone else for everything.) We think it's time for you to think.

Don't Knock It...

I am posted on the block, gone of that 'dro...
We fnt to hit the sto'e

My hat on my head but its hanging low, low

My ninja joy ridin' in a new sto' low

Leavin' dudes behind playin' mark-o-po-lo

Free me, that's what I am yellin' to the crowd

Move in peace bear, young Mike fnt to make you proud

Probation is a motha but ya know we gone stay on top

I am gone shine till my body drop

Gettin' money ain't gone stop til my heart drop

Young Mike, aka Young Baby Stacks

I am in the game, so you dudes better watch ya back!

-Baby Snackz

From The Beat: You know, we had to change some of your words and leave others out because you're trying to get over on The Beat rules. If you don't understand what they are, ask the Beat facilitator what we won't let you say. If what you're experiencing right now is staying "on top" — living with only males, taking orders for when to sit, sleep, get up, eat, etc. — then we wonder what the bottom looks like. Take a good look around you and make a choice... is this what you want? (We couldn't print your second piece at all...)

Sleeping And Reading

Man, forget this shhh. Man, I hate life up in here. I don't have court until the 18th of September. I wish I got out today (Sept 4, '07). I miss my mom, grandma, my baby brother.

How I use my time? I sleep most of the time. I read all the time. I read hecka books, like urban books, Black drama, like "Every Thug Need a Lady," "Coldest Winter Ever," "A Piece of Cake," "Diary of a Groupie." I hope I'm not coming back.

-Big Bird

From The Beat: Books contain the wisdom of the world. We hope you expand your choices to include things and people you know little or nothing about, and not just those that relate to the life you already know so well. How much do you miss your mom, grandma and baby brother? Enough to put them ahead of whatever you did that brought you here? Time will tell.

The Best Book I Ever Read

The Best book I read is called the Ski Mask Way. That's my favorite book 'cause it got violence, strippers, sex and drugs. That book was about a dude and his pawna. They would go and bust licks. They would come up wit' at least 20 thou-wows every time they bust they licks.

They also used a female to set up the foo's wit' the work. In the end, dude bust his pawna and the female over some dough and the work. I feel dat book 'cause it's telling you don't trust anybody 'cause ninjas would kill you over money.

-Alky

From The Beat: We're not sure we like the moral of this story, but we admire you for using your time to read. We can understand why a book that talks about familiar things would appeal to you, but do you ever read books about subjects or places you really know nothing about? That's one of the great things about books — they can take us places we can only dream of going, and they can teach us the world.

Those Were The Days

Those were the days, when I was on the outs, kickin' it with my homies, just chillin' with some females, just gettin' into trouble and shhh. Well, those were the days--when I was out...

-Grande

From The Beat: And if you want to stay out (next time), you might want to add a few more activities to your list, like going to school and listening to those who care the most about you.

I Don't Know What To Do

What up? This Dri, man
I'm locked up and I don't know what to do
The last vision I seen was with the crew
Forget the SFPD wit' all the black an' blue
They only handcuff us to make them big bucks

-Dri

From The Beat: If you don't know what to do, who does? You say the cops handcuff you only to make their money, but if you didn't give them any reason to handcuff you, you wouldn't be here crying about it. You can say, "Forget the SFPD," all you want, but the truth is, that's not going to happen until you look at your own responsibility for where you are.

Using Your Time

I try my best to make time go by fast, but it's hard
'cause I got these new charges and they tryna wash me.
But to keep ma head up and make time go by quick as possible, I read as many books as I can or reminisce with my roommate about the good days before this beef and juvenile came into our lives.

-Cal

From The Beat: If you picked up new charges, we have to ask why you say "they" are trying to wash you. Didn't you just hand them all the power they need to do just that? Sounds like you might be washing yourself. What do you like to read? What do you want to do with your life?

Learning From My Mistakes

Well, I'm back foe a punk-ass warrant and I'm going to Walden House to do my time. Well, I'm in here, thinking about a lot of stuff. My auntie think that it's her fault that I'm in here, but it's nobody fault but mines, because I'm the one that's making mistakes and I'm learning from them.

-Lil' Ques

From The Beat: It's encouraging that you're learning from your mistakes. Can you share with us some of the lessons you have learned?

Life

Life is like a game of chess
You're just a little pawn in this big board
Stuck in the system, people telling you what to do
Can't tell who's your enemy or who is who
Just gotta move on forward, no looking back
Omega to change you' life and listen to Jack
Get caught by the police—it's a wrap
Stay outta trouble, 'cause the system's a trap

-Check Mate

From The Beat: If you're trustworthy, you tend to assume you can trust others? If you always try to get over on people, you suspect that others are trying to play you? On the outs, do you trust your homies? Now that you've been in the juvenile justice system, do you still trust your homies?

I Want

I wanna be free!
On da g
Wid da homies!
I wanna be legal!
I want to be rich!
I wanna succeed!
I want to go home
I wanna be free!

-White boy

From The Beat: Every one of these wishes can come true. Like so much, it all depends on you.

Stressed

I'm very stressed right now, wondering what my case would turn out to be. Adult court? No adult court? I don't feel I should go there because I am not even 15. Even though it's a serious case, I deserve a second chance.

-Chinese Boy

From The Beat: We have noticed how stressed this situation is for you, and we wish we could take some of that stress off your shoulders. Unfortunately, like the old saying goes, you made your bed, now you have to sleep in it. We definitely agree that you are not an adult and should not have to be judged as an adult, but we have no control over that. The problem with saying you "deserve" a second chance is that no one can be sure of that until after the chance is given, and then the judge (or whoever) gave you the chance can determine by your actions whether it was deserved or not. We wish you only good luck. If there's anything we can do to help, ask us.

Esto Va Toda La Raza (This Goes For My People)

Estas mi casa (this is my home) I was raised here and born here

I would neva let it go. How could I let it go?

Estas mi casa, no matta what people say. Yup, yup.

People know I'm here to stay

Estas mi casa con pandillas por aqui con pandillas por alla

(This is my home with gangs from here and from there)

Esas mi vida real (That is my real life)

Estas mi casa where I pray every night

And tell God dat I'm still alive

Now this is ma 'hood

When time gets hard I put ma head up to the sky

And I pray to God for every life that I got

'Cause you know what? Life ain't easy nowadays

Livin' in a 'hood that you don't even undastand

Thinking for a minute changes all my words

I was raised where I had everything and mo'e

But you know what? Went out the Bay

And thought about things I wouldn't even regret

Went to a city that I didn't comprehend

Southern California, but it's all the same

Came back to thte Bay

Started middle school

It wasn't thte same anymore

Already gangbangerin' wit' the homies I knew

But went back to LA and it wasn't the same

I guess homies change

Afta days

-Negra, San Francisco

From The Beat: From the way you write, we can tell that you use your mind, which is the gift that sets us apart from animals. What we hope is that you will continue to do so, because thinking is a process that continues to change everything. Yes, homies change, you change, everything changes. The only question is, how much will you control the changes that are coming, and how much will you allow others to control those changes, whether they are shot callers out there or systems people in here.

I Hate That I'm In Here

I hate that I'm in here, 'cause I can't see my boyfriend and I can't be with my buddies. I miss my mother and I gotta get back to my 'jets. I miss my house. I only been here since Thursday. I'm going home tomorrow. I can't wait.

-Water Gurl

From The Beat: We almost didn't publish this because there's really nothing much to learn from what you wrote. For example, what do you plan to do when you get back? If it's more of the same, then prepare yourself for more of this same... If you see changes in your future, tell us what they are.

RIP To My Big Homies

Man, what's poppin' with The Beat? Me, same shhh different toilet. My topic is RIP my homies. Man, this shhh is crazy. I just lost two big homies in the last two months. This shhh getting out of control. It's beef all around the city. People is losing their loved ones all over, but the cold thing about where I'm from is the war has just begun. Like Bra Bra said, "This beef is thick casualties of war every day. RIP homies.

-Anto

From The Beat: This war has been going on a very long time, it's just that we all see what's in our own time and not what came before, and not what's coming after. While those with power (mostly white men) stand back and watch, those without power do the work for them by continuing to go to war with others at the bottom. It's like being at war within yourself. It's not the beginning of this war we want to know about... it's the end we're interested in.

I Can't Feel My Thoughts

It's cold outside and I only got some matches
Different colors on and nothing that matches
He's screaming my name with his hands on the latches
Trying to take a shower, but I can't get clean
'Cause I live in this trash can
I am used to living dirty
Picking up garbage like the trash man
God said He'd drop me a bar of soap off
So I walk the world naked
With all my clothes off
I can't walk down the right way
Because it's closed off
So I roll soft
These drugs of life
I am living in the future
So my thugs is knights
My dark side said
"Turn on the lights"
Even though I am doing wrong
I feel it's right
My soul burns light
Because I am a candle with no light
I can't be nice when living in these rough stages
They kidnapped me
Now I am a lion in these tough cages
My brothers getting killed
It's outrageous
Are you feeling the Dark Side's soul yet?
Another dream
Ha ha ha ha
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side

From The Beat: So what inspired this piece? Is it a dream? A powerful one at that.

Staying Out For My Son

What's up Beat! Today was just the same day I live day by day in here from the last past 128 days. I have a son to go home to so I have someone to go home for. With my son, I have to be there for him. So I have to do my time and go home to him. Because I don't want for him to go the way I did. So I have to stay out to teach him the right way to go. At the same time my son is going to help me stay out but myself I have to stay out for myself too.

-Vago

From The Beat: Yes, your son needs you there with him living the right way so that he sees the right way to live. How are you preparing yourself now to live in freedom when you walk out of here?

Stranded

I'm stranded
Stuck in one place
Been here forever
Still got forever to go
Took one way in
Still can't get out
I don't wanna be here
I don't need to
My interactions are limited
Got me on a leash
I'm tryin' to break free
I'm at the halfway point
Twenty-three to go
I'm talkin' 'bout weeks, not days
But I'm still stranded
Middle of nowhere
Wouldn't leave if I could
But when that day comes
I'm a go down the hill
And I won't look back
You couldn't pay me to come back
My movement been controlled for too long
When I get off this mountain
I'm a live life to the fullest
I'm gonna do what I want, when I want
'Cause I gotta make up for lost time

-Birdman

From The Beat: Nice. In a way, you are pretty much alone, stranded in the middle of the woods, miles from the ocean, fifty miles from home in San Francisco. Your patience is so good, and once you're home again, you won't ever have to come back, if you decide your freedom means everything to you. Your choice!

Stranded

The time in my life where I felt stranded the most is now. I been up in U7 stressing for the last 82 days about where I am going to go. At first my PO and the DA was talking about the Y till I am 21. But now it's just the Ranch for a year. That is where I am gone to be stranded the most when I go there. Away from all my ninjas and family for a whole year that is gone to be the hardest part. But a thug got to ride it out for the year, and best believe I am gone make it.

-Beans

From The Beat: Oh, we believe you're going to make it, but what then? If you define yourself as a thug, then what comes after the Ranch? Can you keep doing what you've been doing without facing the same (or worse) consequences? Tell us how.

Feeling My Brother's Departure

What's up Beat? It's ya boy Chunky. Me, just chillin' out here, writing this piece of shhh. I rather be in my room right now 'cause I'm not feeling good right now.

But anyway, my brother leaving tomorrow. He goin' to Samoa on Thursday. I'm happy for him, but I feel some kind of thing in my body 'cause my brother leaving. But I ain't trippin'. I'ma hold it down wit' the homies. At least I still got my brother Chinky, and that's fo' sho.

But anyway, all I'm trying to do is get out. My max time is nine years.

-Chunky

From The Beat: We're glad that your brother got out of here and is on his way to Samoa, but we feel your unhappiness and having to say good-bye. You're facing some serious time, so we hope you are able to use it to challenge yourself — to make yourself think about things as they have been and as you'd like them to be. Now's the time to prepare for a better future.

Jesus Christ

I never knew nothing about my father's soul or his past
That's why now I understand why he beat me
Some day death will meet me
Still my thoughts haunt me
As my skeletons eat me
But my faith in the Lord grows
As I watched Him deliver me
From the devil's grip
Out came the light
As the Dark Side got ripped
I'll never understand why he gave me this dark power
Because time will run out at the end of the hour
Jesus knows my heart
But yet he will not show me my mother's face
So in the ghetto I live with a gun
Creating my own face
But at the same time
Blasting my way through my own faith
Click clack
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side

From The Beat: You write that you never knew anything about your father's soul or his past, so how can you understand why he beat you? It's not your fault your dad beat you, it's his. You didn't deserve to be beaten. No matter what was troubling your father, he had no right to hurt you. You have our hearts.

Using My Time

I make sure I use my time, 'cause in ten minutes, I might not be alive, so I make sure I'm happy and say my prayers.
God, forgive me. Yes, yes, yes.

-Lucero

From The Beat: What does it mean to ask for God's forgiveness? Does that prayer include a firm determination to make some changes, or does God bear all the responsibility for the choices you make?

God, Why?

I shed no tears
I have no fear,
God, why do you bring me here?
I hate dis place so I'm gone stay away
My name ring bells
I hope I don't go to hell
It's just a matter of time before it's my time
I did the crime,,, look at me now doing the time
In my mind I did nothing wrong
I can't wait till it's my time to go home.
No mo'e 10 min. on da phone, dat's whack
What would I be with out that strap?
Now ask your self that

-Mookey

From The Beat: Is it God that brought you here? If so, you must think that God has let you down. If that's the case — and if you did nothing wrong in your mind — then why do you hope you won't go to hell? If you truly shed no tears, it's only because they are backing up inside you, ready to come out in a torrent.

Free Style Rap

They supposed to get us out at seven, but they gettin'
us out at eight
Everybody in juvenile, these counselors ain't fake
Always tryin' to do some dirty shhh and give a ninja time
When you try to correct they ass, they always say you
lyin'
They know I ain't lyin', they know I'm telling the truth
Only reason why they come to work is for the loot
But I ain't trippin' 'cause ninjas know I'm a star
When they get they money, they go buy weak-ass cars

-Young Bundy

From The Beat: As long as you put yourself in a position where people with power control your every move, what you describe will be your reality. The only way to change it is to change the reality of where you are. And the only way to change the reality of where you are is to change the reality of the thinking that got you where you are. And that ain't no "weak-ass car!"

Monster, The Best Book I Ever Read

The best book I ever read was "Monster." It's about a Crip form LA. I think it has to do with all the violence and the pain. I read it about five times, but the end is weak. He turns into a Muslim.

-Menace

From The Beat: Why do you think Monster Cody's becoming a Muslim was weak? Is it the way he wrote the ending or the fact that he changed his religion that you consider to be weak?

Tribute To A Helpful Counselor

I just want to thank all people involved in the program because in the time I been here, I have realized so many things that make me think if I want to be here or why the people I love and I say I want to be out there with, why the people I really love I am not with.

-The Outsider

From The Beat: We admire you for thinking, and we also admire you for writing in a language (English) that is not your first language. Speaking another language is like living your life — it gets easier the more you do it!

Thanks For Giving A Damn

A helpful counselor on my unit is Coolger and Setti. They put us up on game so we can realize this jail shhh lame. Coolger like a father I never had. He help me out when I'm down and out. I feel I can tell and ask him anything. Thank you Coolger and Setti for givin' a damn.

-Mook

From The Beat: It's nice to thank those for the help you've received. I know these two counselors will appreciate hearing your words of praise.

501

They got me in "51-50" They say I am crazy, 'cause I said I was going to jump. They got me locked down, 51-50, between these four walls, that I can't think at all.

They got me locked down on BMP (behavior management program.) When I can't think, I read. When I can't read, I sleep. If I can't sleep, I eat. But how can I eat if we only get three meals a day? But I say I am 51-50, but I have a choice, so I bizz the staff.

-Tashelle

From The Beat: We changed your numbers to 51-50 because that's what stands for mental commitments. Do you think you're crazy? Are you learning things about yourself in BMP? You say you have a choice, so tell us what you're choosing.

Reading Can Be Fun

To help your time pass is reading books. Then try to use the stuff you get out of it and pass it to some one else. When you pick up a book, you can find out a lot of stuff that you didn't know. Reading is fun when you want it to be.

-Acie

From The Beat: This is really the beginning of a good piece. We say the "beginning" because it doesn't go far enough. We wish you had included some examples of books you have read and liked, and told us what was good about them, and what you learned. Giving examples and details is what makes a good piece for The Beat.

My Helpful Counselor Is Jesus

Well, what up Beat?
Well, as for me, feelin' good.
I just got a letter that
made me feel so much better.
A letter that comes from above, from
my angel of mine that's always been by my side.
I barely got released
but then I came back and opened my eyes.
I realized that I should stop and drop all this shit,
take a break and get some space.
Think about how I need to change ...
So far, I came up with giving myself to the Lord,
and this time for reals,
not just a will and deal
but give him my life and trust him.
Believe me, its hard and I forget
but I try to remind myself that if I wasn't for him,
I wouldn't have nothing, not even a life.
I would even have this pencil or paper to write.
So I'm thankful for everything,
including the air I breathe.
Well, thank you Jesus, for everything.

-Elizabeth

From The Beat: Sometimes having faith in a higher force is more powerful than having faith in those around us. You say you are giving yourself to the Lord for real, does this mean a dedication to improve yourself?

Tribute to My Mommy: Ms Yoder

Hey, what's good? This be your girl Laughter again, here to talk about the best counselor: My play mommy, Ms Yoder. Not only is she a strong woman, she's the only person in here who really cares about me. She's someone I can lean on when times get rough or even when things are good. She's built me up to be the proper young lady that I am today. I wanna say thank you and I love you Ms Yoder.

"Till next time and keep your head up.

-Laughter

From The Beat: It's nice to hear that a counselor has made such a difference in your life. The reason we picked this topic is to hear stories just like this one!

If I Were A Fish

If I were a fish my worries would be different
I wouldn't be hidin' behind this tree
thinking' which way to run
I wouldn't be in a tank swimming peacefully
I wouldn't be hidin' behind this tree from the police
I wouldn't be hidin' behind this tree thinking what I'm
going to eat
I would have someone feed me what I like to eat
If I was a fish I could flap my fins with my family
I wouldn't be hidin' behind this tree cussin' my loved
ones out
'cause the ringtone keeps goin' off when they call me
If I was a fish I wouldn't have to worry about what the
judge's decision is going to be
when he judges me
Unfortunately this damn tree is the walls surrounding
me
They starting to talk
Peace! haha

- Baby L

From The Beat: Nice peace. Get yourself back on track! What must you do to find freedom? Is it too late? Hope not.

Singing

What's up Beat? The way I use my time while I'm incarcerated is singing. Shhhh, I'm forever singing in my cell. Naw, saying, but, other than that I'm always working out.

-Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: We're not sure what your "Naw" means, but if you really do sing to pass the time, we think that's a fine example of taking yourself out of a mental place and putting yourself in another, and better, mental place. Can you sing for us?

Brown Man

I am brown
But being black or white is firme
But being brown is where I'm found,

Holding my fist up in the air
Showing that I'm Chicano
And that I care.

The barrio I now live in forever
To forever
To stay

One day when I reach my goal
I'll have the future
Between my soul.

Right now I ain't got much
But I got my pride
That's more than any vato has inside.

-Ceasar

From The Beat: We sense your pride from this latest contribution. Tell us about the barrio you never want to leave from. What are your goals? What do you want for your future? How does incarceration play in the mix? And this pride you have, allow it to shine and hopefully let others see that they too should feel good about who they are, regardless of where they are from!

I'm Lost

When I was a very young teen, I was with my homies. We were walking down the street to the store to get some stuff and they gave me \$50 to get whatever and I went in to the store and next thing you know, they're gone. So, I'm walking, trying to find them and see where they went but I couldn't find them.

I felt really scared because I had no place to stay until I met this lady named Tassy. She gave me shelter and food, she even gave me money and the clothes on my back. She told me that those people that left me were not my friends.

-Kristen

From The Beat: Tassy was certainly right. This sounds like it was a very hard and scary time for you. But you have a great way of expressing yourself, so you should think about writing more about what it was like to have nowhere to go at such a young age.

I Want It Now!

I was walking one day by a nice autographed picture of Muhammad Ali on display in a store. When I seen it I wanted it very bad. I became fidgety because I was on a quest to get it. I was to fulfill this by stealing this. My password to get this was to con the store workers and get it.

-Ben

From The Beat: So what happened? Did you get it? As for stealing, have you realized the ill's of taking things that do not belong to you?

My Trouble

Damn, I never thought I'd see you again when I look up
at the stairs at night
I pray to God with all my might that I'll see you in real
life..
Sometimes when I'm all alone I cry because I'm on my
own
the tears I cry are better yet worn
they follow up with life but take no form
I cry because with out you here I find it difficult to carry
on
There's thousands of friends
but who do you know that will stop a long to help
another carry on
the world moves so fast
it would rather pass us then to see what makes us cry
at night
yes it is sad at the same time but I wonder why
what is all these murders that pass in front of my eyes
all these tears for all these years
so when I walk out of these walls tell me what you see
just disguise when I go outside
yes this flaw is sad but the same time true
just look in my green eyes and tell me what you see
please don't lie to me 'cause that's all I've seen

-Steven

From The Beat: Thank you for this heartfelt piece of poetry. We have a few questions for you... Who are you writing to? Who has left you alone? Where is your family? Where do you go from juvenile hall? How did it get to this point of not trusting others?

Dreaming

Wow Beat, I just had a crazy dream. I thought I had just waken up, and my vision was weird; also, I felt like I was floating. My head felt different, so I went to the mirror to see what was wrong. It was immediately obvious, I had three eyes. Somehow I knew before I looked in the mirror, but once I saw myself I was like "what the hell?" then I woke up again into another dream...

-Monk

From The Beat: We'll keep it simple, strange dream, but that's dreams, strange.

A Stranded Day

I remember back in the days, when I would be just chilling, kicking back with the homies, up in Hayward, just cruisin' through the city, about to roll to Southland Mall, but when we got there it was closed, so we decide to got get something to eat, so we went to eat at a Mountain Mike's, you know just posting - eating, hangin' out - a coo' old weekend, you know?

Then it went all bad, rivals came through, straight mean muggin', so funk came to funk, we took it outside. You know words at first, then came blows. I was the first to jump then my homie backed me up, then after that, the rest of the homies ran, straight left us hangin'.

After about five minutes, the owner was goin' to call the cops, so the rivals called us names and ran off, so me and Andy had to get up and find a way to get back to my grandma's house, way on the other side of town, with out a ride, trying to make it in the wrong area, man, that's when I felt so alone.

- Ace

From The Beat: Your story goes full circle. You take us on a ride enjoying a good day in Hayward, and then how fast it all turns ugly with a rumble and where you find yourself alone needing to get across town alone. You deliver a story of a young gangster. And the lesson to your story?

Feelin Stranded

Some times I sit in my cell and feel stranded
only 25 to life is what's tryin' to be handed
me and the homies, one took the perfect choice
they askin' me to speak
but they ain't hearin' my voice
I'm keeping it solid always stayin' quiet
my life is a mess I can't deny it
I'm gonna ride this one through like a thugged out
rider...
well beat I'm out of time
to all in the hall stay up.

- Chunks

From The Beat: Choices, you made the choice that put you in this place, and you'll make the choice how to deal with your life from this point forward. We hope whatever you decide is the right choice that will benefit you in the end and not keep you deeper in this hole.

Educate Yourself

Hey what up Beat, it's your boy Lil'Knuckles coming from the max.

Today's topic I am writing about is using my time. As for me I mostly try to work out to look good for the mamas, you feel me!?

One main thing I do in my unit is keep myself busy with school work because knowledge is a good thing.

Well I am graduating from high school by the end of September to me that's a great goal I will accomplish.

I just want to tell all out there that they can also make this shhh happen just set your mind to it put all bull shhh aside. Just live your life by the minute don't think about the future!

Well that's all for today, take care and stay up to all doing hard time.

- Lil' Knuckles

From The Beat: Good for you in taking the school route so serious. We are thrilled to hear that a high school diploma will soon be in your hands. Congrats! What next?

Coming Back Into Custody

Well, I was only out for
what, a week and a day?

I ask myself why?

Why in the heck did I take the blame?

I came back in only eight days.

I felt so fake, until I waked.

Woke up in here in my pink t-shirt.

I swore up and down, I was gonna do good.

I didn't even chill, and I wouldn't if I could.

I had things going for me.

My dream was turning into reality, but
it flashed in front off my face.

When I seen the disappointment in my man's face
When he realized he was going to a horrible place.

I panicked! Thinking: They're snatching my faith.
They're placing my man in restraints, so I spoke
without thinking, saying everything's mine, that
got me in here ... not no new crime.

So, I'm locked back up, but I can say it's 'cause of love!

Two years strong, that's why we belong.

People telling me I'm dumb but young.

Yea, so maybe I'm sprung!

Got me doing things I'll never do, I'm sprung!

Well that's what's up

-Elizabeth

From The Beat: If your man really cared about your safety and well-being, why was he putting you in harm's way? You sound like you really love him, but as Janet Jackson said: What has he done for you lately?

Using My Time To Read

I use my time wisely. Being in the outs I ain't ever read a book in my whole life. Reading was boring, I was too busy kickin' it with the hood and my family. But being in here changed that. I read in here. I'm in the process of reading my first book. It's cool being able to read a book. I am so impatient to get to the conclusion of the book. I like reading now. Hopefully on the outs I can make more time to read.

-Theresa

From The Beat: It's great to hear that you're in the middle of reading your first book! It sounds like you've found a way to spend your time that is both enjoyable and that will serve you well on the outside. What is it about the book that's making it so hard to put down? What made you pick it up in the first place having never read before? We hope you do make the time to continue to read in the future.

Time Using Me

Q-Vole Beat? It's Chuccey. Well, most of the topics aren't really coo', so I'm gonna make my own up. Its called "Time Using Me." Just made a little change, ya feel me.

Each day and night that passes by, nothing changes but the different set of clothes. It seems that every morning that I wake up to, it just like hitting the replay button once again. It's always the same nasty-ass eggs in the morning. It's like a cycle that never ends. To top it off I got to start the day off by looking at my ugly roommate.

This "program" eats at me slowly without me even noticing it. And before you know it, I'm counting every single day until your court. It got me all stressed out now and all irritated by everything. It's like a bug that keeps flying in your face but just can't seem to slap it off. I see different people come and go but not me. I'm stuck like Chuck. So now maybe about almost six months passed, right. Still have no idea where I'm going or what I'm doing. It's all confusin' bs. Time is doing me! (I think)

-Chuccey

From The Beat: If nothing is changing for you, if every day is just like the day before, then we don't believe the last two words of your piece — "I think" — are accurate. In fact, thinking is the only thing you control where you are. The breakfast won't change. The daily routine won't change. The four walls won't change. But if you take that time to examine your life, your thoughts, your actions, the things that matter to you and why, and the things that don't, then you will be using your time wisely. That kind of self-examination brings about change even when you can't predict where that change will take you. You may not be able to measure the changes it brings, but by forcing yourself to think deeply about things, you initiate a process that never ends as long as you remain curious and willing to challenge yourself. Give it a try.

Stranded!

The first time I was stranded was when I was six years old. I was just getting out of school and I was waiting for a friend because we ere going to take the school bus home that day. I waited long enough, and as soon as I was going to the bus stop in front of the school, the bus was not there. I walked back to where my friend said she was going to be at, but she never showed up, so I got really scared. I did not know what to do, and I was freaking out because I had to be home right after school, and if I was not there I would be in big trouble. That was the first time I got stranded.

-Moss

From The Beat: We really like what you wrote, but you only made us curious for more details — the kind of details that turn an ordinary piece of writing into a great piece of writing. For example, what happened to your friend? Why didn't she ever show up? Did you get home in time to avoid trouble, or did you face some consequences? Since you apparently missed the bus you were supposed to take, how late did you get home? Thinking about these questions (and others you could add yourself) is what it means to take your writing to the next level.

No Turnin' Back Now...

What up, Beat? What it do? This yo' boy Thirst, and this week hasn't been so good for me. I've gone through a lot of struggles in the last two days. It's pretty crazy. My decisions in the last two days have put me in this point: "No turnin' back now."

There is no turnin' back now the crime that they have been sayin' that I did. But the truth is that I don't know anything about this 187 (murder charge) that they said I did. Well to get to my story it was a very long night for us — me and my boy and now my ex-lady. The cops were interrogating my boy for so long. Once they stopped, the cops started to talk to me for just one hour. I guess they seen that I wasn't going to say anything that they wanted me to say. They put me in a holding cell for about 8 hours. This whole time they were talkin' to my ex and my boy.

Now by this time they got what they wanted from both people. I loved both of them. My boy was like a brother to me. We did hella things together with my real brother and by ourselves. Now my ex, I was with her for two years. I loved this girl with all my heart truly... But the cops got what they wanted from the both of them — "a story." They both said I was there that night the incident happened...

Man, I thought he was my boy and she was my love, but I guess everything changes when you're under a little pressure. Well to get to my point, if I wanted to fight the case, I would have gotten life just because of what these two people said! But now there's no turning back.

Well Beat, that was the whole reason I wanted to write this to get it off my chest. Well Beat, thanks for listening and much love and respect to all that's in here with me. You know who you are. Well Beat 'till next time. Late.

-Thirst

From The Beat: You're not going to be happy with the paragraph we took out of this piece, Thirst, but please let us explain. When you agree to plead guilty to a crime, the law REQUIRES that there be what's called a "factual basis" to your plea. If, after you enter the plea, you deny the factual basis, you have given the judge the power to revoke your plea, and put you on trial. Since the government now has two witnesses against you (even if they are lying), there is a better-than-even chance you would lose everything. Therefore, we're not going to allow you to undo the deal you and your attorney worked out with the prosecution, because we think it's the best deal under the circumstances. We hope you understand.

My Celly Is Under My Wing

The person I took under my wing is my celly

he had a bad life in the past

he been in group homes all his life

he likes being in here

he became my roommate a while back

I educated him

he learn from it

he was always gettin' in trouble

now he carries himself a lot better than before

I told him that when he gets out he has a home

at my house where I live

his life is not like mine because I chose to go down a different road

my family was always there for me through thick and thin

he never had somebody that cares

I told him that he got home boy love from me

I am going to stay lookin' out for a lil' homie 'cause I stay livin that good life.

-Jake

From The Beat: Good lookin' out, do your part in helping youngsta stay away from places like this. Best to you too. What's your plan upon returning home?

Actin' Blind

My topic today is talking about my free time. Me and my roommate make beats on our wall and bust rhymes, think about doin' good, and not committin' crimes, and really opening our eyes and not actin' blind, I try to do good and use my time wisely and try to accept all the people that despise me cause I want to stop doin' so much wrong, 'cause bein' in here is uncomfortable like a straight man wearin' a thong, really I want to start, then keep doin' right. I wanna be able to look at the stars at night. Bein' in here will take it's toll, it will really do you, these are just some things on the agenda of Freddy Krugga.

-Krugga

From The Beat: "Actin' blind" is an interesting point. We almost always know, inside our gut, what we should and shouldn't be doing. Instead of pretending like we don't know better, we ought to work on overcoming our feelings that we can't do something, work on believing in our capacity to make things happen even in the face of family and societal challenges.

Longing For Home

Whats up Beat Within you guys know me, Luis, I was in B6 in last year. I know one person that work in the Beat Within name Allan, he knows me.

I been here eight months maybe going to Starlight or go to my aunt's house.

I need to get out of here. I know what staff do to us if they don't follow the rules they will dip you and get you to BR. I been here for a long time. I was sixteen year old and I turn seventeen year old in here.

I want to be with my family. I need to get out of here for sure. Get out of here, get job and get a car and go to college. I use to be in one unit they moved me to another then they move me to two other units, because I was 17 years old. Then they took me to this crazy unit, though it is cool, we stay out of the room for hours.

I really miss my family, they miss me too. I didn't see my family for eight years, they want me home. I need to watch over my brother and my sister and help my family out to pay the rent. I want to go fishing with my dad, all day having fun with my family. I miss them. I wish I will get out of soon. My family is waiting for me to come out of here.

Well that's all I have to say Beat I am out late.

-Luis

From The Beat: We hope you date for freedom is near. Sounds like you are more than ready to go home. We hope returning home works out for you!

Passing Time By

Trying to pass this time by as best as possible knowing that this is just one more obstacle

day in day out nothin' has changed

seen people come and go

some coo', some strange

some still bang, and some have changed

trying to keep my sanity, but slowly going insane

looking for some breaks in this car I'm in,

but I'm stuck in the fast lane

heart has turned stone cold, so I no longer feel the pain ain't seen a sunny day in so long that I've just learned to

love the rain

wondering why I'm so eager to pass up this time

when the only thing awaiting is the flames.

-Kastro

From The Beat: What flames are you talking about? You're goin' to get your freedom back soon enough, then what? Back to the life? A new you? Time will tell. Hopefully you'll feel and appreciate the sun when it breaks through in your life!

Almost Stranded

I almost got stranded in a fight. We were at a hotel party in Sunnyvale we got into some shhh with these guys I don't like. When everyone was bouncing out most of my friends passed by me and left me behind. I guess they didn't see me. I was lucky my homeboy grabbed my shoulder and told me to run.

When I turned to run I slipped on the curb and almost fell on my face. I remember when I was running I heard a girl scream, "you guys are assholes." Good thing I didn't get left behind cause I would've got jumped or taken in.

-Xnotoriousviet

From The Beat: A close call to say the least. You were lucky that night.

Home

Today's topic is "Using Your Time". The way I use my time in here is basically making this place my home. If I'm gonna be here for a long time I'm gonna get as comfortable as I can.

I joke around all the time, I don't really take things or this place seriously. I play handball and bones with my fellow homegirls. I also take advantage of the programs here. I don't trip off the time or the staff. I just keep it real. It works for me but not most people.

Well Beat, that's it for tonight. Until next time, stay up, much love!

-India

From The Beat: It sounds like you've really been able to adapt to the situation you're in and that you're trying to make the best of it. It's interesting that you titled this piece "Home". Does juvenile Hall feel like "home" to you? What parts of it make it feel this way? Is there anything about it that is similar to the home you have on the outside? What does "home" mean to you and how are you able to create a space that feels safe and homey in the middle of a lot of difficulty?

Break Up to Make Up

Hey what's good? This be your girl Laughter here to talk about breaking up. Breaking up to make up is not a think for me. If we split up, it's a done deal. Don't you see? No breaking up and then calling five minutes later to make up. Once we break up, we're done and through. Just think very hard cause the decisions on you.

-Laughter

From The Beat: This is a good point. Why do people play the whole break up to make up game? Perhaps they use it as a way to manipulate. So cheers to you standing up to this shady game.

Don't Rot In Your Cell

What it do? I use my time wisely by focusing on the positive impact from my family and friends. I'm very aware of the temptations that cross in my path that I go through these obstacles. Actually I verify refer to myself as a leader because to be one you're to take bads things and make them into something good.

I use both good and bad things to tell myself that there will always be a bump in the road or a person interfering in our lives to damage our self-esteem. So remember using your time in the hall should be good because if not you can rot in your cell and focus on the past so keep your head up and focus on the good times...

-Mathews

From The Beat: Lot's of young people spend their time in the hall wisely in order to become happier people: young people get physically healthy, they reflect on their drug and alcohol addictions, and some young people realize that they are smart and that they can complete school. But, what is it about leaving the hall that many young people no longer are able to work to become happier people on the outs?

Stranded

If I stop to think about my life, I realize I am pretty much stranded. Especially at this point in my life ... The reason I came back to the Hall this time is because my mom decided to move again, to try to get back with my Stepdad. We moved to Portland two weeks after I got out and I hardly got enough time to enjoy myself and say goodbye. The whole time I was living with her, I begged her to let me come back to California.

One day, she decided to let me come back to stay with my grandparents. Well, after that she decided she wanted me back with her and she got me a plane ticket back. I refused to go back to live with her - I still do.

My PO found out from my mom and since I wasn't living with any family members at that time, he put out a warrant for me.

One night I was gonna go to my grandparent's house and I was waiting for them to pick me up from 7Eleven. Well, while I was waiting, my mom called me. I hadn't been talking to her, so I decided to answer her call... I regret doing that! She was being all nice on the phone, asking me how I was and where I was. I decided to tell her, which again, I shouldn't have done.

After I got off the phone with her, I was talking to one of my homegirls on the phone when a cop pulled up. I didn't think anything of it because it was before curfew and I was just minding my own business. The cop came up to me and asked me for my name. I asked him why and he said: You have a warrant, you're under arrest and handcuffed me. I had no idea I had a warrant, especially because I got arrested two days earlier for trespassing. The whole way to the police state I was yelling at the cop, saying: "Let me go!!! I don't have a warrant!"

Well, it turns out that I did have a warrant and my mom snitched me out for the third time. Now, I am stuck in here again, waiting to see if they'll release me to my dad or grandparents. I hope everything works out and I never wanna come back here again. It just proves to me that the only person I really have in my life is me.

-Squeaks

From The Beat: There is a saying: "You can pick your friends, but not your family." It seems like the problems between you and your mother and landing you in the system. But perhaps the best way to proceed is to try and better yourself and then you'll seem like the rational one and your mother's instability will become more clear. But remember, you only have one mother - maybe it's a good idea to have at least a cordial relationship with her.

Dance With The Devil

Roses are red
People are dead
Violets are blue
Stories are true

Devil makes you a deal
Sell your soul, everything will reveal
Devil gives you everything you desire
Next thing you notice, burning in fire
Your gonna shout

Your never getting out
God is your heart in your chest
God's angel around you like a bulletproof vest
So don't sell your soul
And believe in God
Do what's right, not wrong!

-Monster

From The Beat: We couldn't agree with you more. It seems that all the religions, from Buddhism to Islam to Christianity and beyond, all ask us to do the right thing, not the wrong thing. But it's so hard to do! Do you have any concrete ideas for HOW to do right? If so, we'd love to hear them!

Chuang Tzu

The best book I ever read, I don't know. I read a lot, the Chuang Tzu always makes me think about life so I guess that's it. sorry beat I'm hella tired..

-Monk

From The Beat: Educate us about Chuang Tzu!?

Best Book

The best book I read was "The Child Called It." I think it is a very sad story, for all those who have read it will feel me. It's a story about child abuse and it's one of the most craziest things I've read. It was almost really like I was there and saw everything the mom did to the son.

Damn to all the child abuse, I hope it will stop one day or just I pray to all those who went through it. Just keep your mind strong and stay up.

-Asian Guy

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing about this book. Not enough people know about and talk about child abuse. This book is famous for its story and shows the personal anguish that abused children go through from their experiences.

Stranded

A time in my life where I felt like I was stranded is being locked up in here, because I have never been locked up before. So I am used to being at home, not stranded in here. What is stressful is that I don't know how long I will be here, stranded here for, and also not being able to see my lady and my family as long as I am stranded here.

-Chris

From The Beat: Basically, you've now learned what it means to be taken from what you know and love and put into an institution. It's not nice, and since this is your first time, we'd like to know if this experience has caused you to think about your life and your actions in a way that promises some changes in the future.

Stranded in a Casino

I was stranded at a casino in Fresno. My big homies were in the casino makin money and me and my homie were stuck in the mountains going on missions in the hills.

We had two hours to kill time so we were just havin' fun. Doing all kinds of sorts of things.

-Jake

From The Beat: This is sounds like the beginning of a great story, but where's the rest of it? We want to know more!

Death

I'm not feelin' these topics so I thought I'd tell you something personal that I heard today.

Well my cousin just died on Monday September 3, 2007. We were close to each other and what's messed up is that I talked to her on Sunday the day before she died. I loved her she was like a sister to me. I never thought people's hearts can just stop. It scares me to think that when your times up it's over just like that. Well I'm kind of sad but glad she's in a peaceful place hopefully there is a heaven where we will all be halthy and never have to worry about nothing again.

Well 'till next time to all stay up and don't die. RIP Nakisha I love you.

-Jeff

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing Nakisha's passing with readers. It is said that the only for sure thing in life is death. Which could be a sad thing or a happy thing: we could make this mean that we should live out all of our goals and dreams and not worry about what other people think.

The Best Book I Ever Read

The best book I ever read was "The Giver", the reason is because in that story the community gets ran by rules and schedules just like in juvenile hall. For example people have to be in their house a certain time, people earn things if they're good and people get assigned to certain jobs and have to do as they are told. But the good things is that in the community there's no crime because they weren't taught bad things.

-Chueco

From The Beat: The community was crime free but under strict rules. Does a community have to be under strict rules to be a peaceful and calm place? What do you think needs to happen so that people are motivated to live and treat others in a peaceful manner?

Tribute to My Favorite Counselors

Yes I believe it is true that we often hear how people working in the system are playing or working against, rather than for, minors. I have to shed a little light on the subject. I believe the amount of counselors that are to the benefit of us incarcerated minors are of greater amount than those who are believed to do us injustice. I personally have not yet met a counselor that does not do whatever he can do to try and help. I would like to name some and not all so I will just say thanks a lot. Much love seriously.

-Christopher

From The Beat: Certainly there are plenty of people who care about young people in the system and the hall. There are also people who are just working a job. Thank you for providing readers with a warmer side to the system and hall.

Missing My Osito

Q-vole, Beat. I been so sad cause I haven't heard from my man. He's locked up, too. I miss him a lot. I hope he doesn't get a lot of time. I wish I could be out so I could be there for him right now, when he needs me. I miss when we used to kick back at the pad. Well, no matter what I want him to know that I love him and I'm always there for him when I can be. Hopefully, we'll be together soon and never be apart again. Alratos Beat, until pencil and paper meet again.

-Yo

From The Beat: Perhaps the best way to be there for your man is to get out and do really well for yourself, so he'll want to do his best to join you.

Sorry Ain't Enough

What's up Beat!

We all say sorry, but most of us don't really mean it. Like me and my lady we say sorry for a lot of things -- like once she told me "sorry for leaving you" or "sorry for cheating on you" and I say "you shouldn't do it if you were going to be sorry" and I say "don't be a sorry person, don't be sorry just don't do it again."

Like, with a crime that we do we all say sorry and we won't do it again but we end up back in here. Sorry ain't nothing but a word, we all need to stop being sorry.

We're all sorry, both wealthy and poor but we can help it. I cheated on my girl and since then I've been sorry, and I keep saying it. It's just who we are, damn.

-Lil' Blackie

From The Beat: Actions do speak louder than words, but don't you think that sometimes people are truly truly sorry at the time but then they get caught up and make the same mistake because of old habits? Don't give up on yourself, or anyone else, because of mistakes -- it's worth trying again!

Stranded

The time I feel stranded is in here, I feel stranded every single day it's hard in juvie especially if you have been here for 6 months. Times is hard but they just don't know it the judge and all of them don't know. What we go through in here they will never understand times are hard they just don't know. Hearing that door close in the lock, if the sound doesn't make you crazy then what else must. So that's why we're always stranded.

-Mookie

From The Beat: To feel like you are without hope and that you are helpless is a strong statement. Thanks for sharing. It is important to do what ever you can to feel solid, as others write about in this issue. You write about hearing the door close and lock behind you; this is a poignant description and one that is surely shared by others.

A Child Called It

"A Child Called It" is my favorite book because the boy in it tries his best to survive. He is also a good boy but he thinks he's bad. Also, I don't like it because the mom beats him for no reason and he did not even do anything to deserve it and she says really mean things to him for no reason. I just don't get it. The book makes me feel really sad because I been through almost the same things as him and it brings back memories.

-Kristen

From The Beat: This book sounds really intense. It should give you encouragement to write your own life story down, so that maybe one day another young person will read it and not feel so lonely.

Use Your Time Wisely!

Using your time- I work out in my room and I do push-ups and crunches and run in place for ten minutes and plays some games. What do you do--or what can you do - to use your time wisely to better yourself, and to grow so that you never have to come back. You can just watch TV and watch a movie and play hand ball and basketball.

That's how some people spend all their time.

-Gerson

From The Beat: Do you feel like you spend your time better when you're in the hall than when you're out? Do you think that happens with a lot of people?

Locked Up

What's up Beat, it's D straight from Sunnyvale, know what I'm saying? Well I'm back from James Ranch, five weeks and I'm gon' back in the hall, about to get some hall time -- about five months of it. So hopefully I'll do good and get out. I've been in the system for about 17 months and I'm tired of this.

I've gone to both the Ranches and failed, so my PO is like, "You need to get out for yourself and stay out." But when I do get out, I'm gonna go the Fremont High School.

I haven't been to High school because I've been locked up. I got locked up at the end of 8th grade. And I'm just holdin' it down for everybody from my city. Ay, Beat, I've already done my time and two times over. My first charge was a stolen car, and I tried to fight two cops because I was drunk. I took off no I'm stuck in the system I learned my lesson just trying to get out now.

-D

From The Beat: If you had to choose the one thing that holds you back, both in and out, what would it be? Fighting, running, getting caught red-handed? Because it seems like the first step towards becoming truly free would be identifying what it is inside you that is controlling you in a destructive way. Step up and write about that for The Beat next time!

Freedom

I'll never forget the day I was free the fresh air breeze but never in here the only air you get is the vent. I'll ever forget going to a real school. In here this is a hand me down school.

I'll never forget my boo I love her to death. I will do anything for her but now all I only got memories. Time goes by and I only can think of all the things I had. How people that loved me were just trying to save me from this, but I thought I was the king of the world. I never forget when I always said I never had enough but now I know I had it all after loosing it, I'll never forget the day when all went dark for me!

-Jose

From The Beat: Incarceration is dark, and we see how this experience has made you open your eyes to see what good things you have sacrificed for what?? What's the plan from this point forward?

Using My Time Wisely...

When I get out I will be getting out on house arrest. I'm supposed to be going to school. But I'm moving out of San Jose. I'm going to be taking care of my nephews and my baby Raulito (my nephew). I'm also going to be working with my mom. That should be enough to keep me busy. At least when I'm going to be on house arrest, that way I don't cut off my ankle bracelet like I did last time. Well that's all for now. Ok Beat, alrato.

-Troubles

From The Beat: Hey Troubles. Sounds like plenty to keep you occupied. Keep your bracelet on and before long you'll be off probation. In the meantime, stay busy and stay clean.

Silly Sorry Side

I have always felt sorry. Every day I wake up but it's not like I felt sorry for nothing. Sometimes I feel "sorry" for the guiltiness I've done to get here. I feel stupid because I'm from the 'Town, and I feel "sorry" for being in a city I really don't know. If I could take back anything back, it would be my silly sorry side.

Those who read this, think about what I said. It takes a real man to feel sorry, and that's how it is for every man, not just myself. And that's just the way life is. You can feel good about yourself or feel bad, but you will always feel sorry for everything that happens in life.

So one day just say sorry, and trust me, you'll feel good about yourself.

-Cartoon

From The Beat: Recognizing mistakes and really understanding how much they've hurt yourself and others is an incredibly powerful step, so we are glad you stepped up and shared it with The Beat. But is "sorry" enough? What is the next step after that, what is the step you need to take to make things better in the future, so you won't have to spend so much time feeling sorry?

The Bible and RL Stine

The best book I ever read was the Bible because it tells you about Christ and why he died on the cross for us so we will not be born with sin. So I think that is the best book I ever read and I'm still reading it today. I'm about halfway through it and it's a good book to read.

The other book I like to read is the R.L. Stine books because they are scary and they are really cool to read.

So it was nice talking to you Beat. See you next time. See you later. Beat Within.

-M

From The Beat: We appreciate the insight on the books that you most enjoy reading.

RIP Lil Creeper

Well Beat I wanna talk to you about my homeboy that passed away. He's Lil Creeper and I knew him so well, ever since I moved in the hood.

He's a person we lost, a nice reliable homeboy and we all miss him. That made me think about how people leave this earth so fast he was young in his twenties. The bad part about it is that I had to see every one cry and all his family.

Well then we had a car wash and we raise more than \$5,000 and I got locked up a couple days later.

The first thing I'm going to do when I get out is visit his house because he died in front of his house, and that's where everybody kicked it at. Well when I go I'm going to see his pictures and for sure all the homeboys are going to be there and we all going to kick it and tell stories bout him.

All I need to say is RIP Lil' Creeper and just want you to take care of everybody who loved you.

-Spider

From The Beat: Your loyalty to your friend really shows through here. It sounds like he was a wonderful young man who deserved a long and happy life, and even more, that he was truly beloved on this earth. You and his loved ones have our sympathy, and we thank you for honoring him in The Beat.

Stranded So I Stole

Well first, let me start by saying q-vole to all the Beat.

Well I'm good -- just waiting to go to B2 and finish my time.

Well anyways Beat, I was just stranded in a place one time and I did feel mad and messed up because I didn't know where to go, so I decided to steal a car. I got there with my carnal but we got down with some fools and then cops came and my carnal went some other way and I didn't now where I was.

So I stole that car and got my way out. Well, Beat, till next time.

-Spider

From The Beat: It's amazing how things can just spill over and build up like a pile of domino's, isn't it, because one slip can lead to another. You got into a fight, then you got chased, then you got lost, then you had to steal your way home. You got lucky that time, but luck always runs out. Is there a better way to get "unstranded?"

Cousins Under My Wing

All my younger cousins look up to me but they don't know what I'm like, they don't see me all the time. But now I gotta change so I can show them how I change.

I ain't in for this life so I'm gonna stop now.

-Victor

From The Beat: It's good to hear this, you deserve much more than the stress of the streets and the system, and your cousins deserve a full time presence to look up to!

How to Make It

What do we do to make it in this place? That's the question we ask each other, but we always come back. Are we ever going to learn from our mistakes so we will not come back here anymore and just stay out. But we always say that we will never come back but next thing you know we are locked up again, we must stay out of here my ninjas. Stay up.

-Mookie

From The Beat: What an important point you make Mookie. Young people continue to return to the hall even when they planned to never return. Why do you think so many young people continue to return? What can be done about this?

The Life I Lead

What up Beat? Well today I'ma drop some lines, or a rap you can say, about the life I lead.

The life I lead ain't no joke
Seen best friends die in front of my eyes
And heard about close homies getting smoked
Walked around these San Jose streets
With clothes with many holes
Seen mamas crying
They're smoking tweak
Resulting with their babies dying
...That's all for now
Don't have much time.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: This poem is terrifying - you've seen, and maybe done, more in one lifetime than most of us experience in our worst nightmares. Do you think if the rest of the country could see what you see, things would be different and there would be more compassion for others' suffering? Is this a life you want to give up, or continue?

Court

Beat, It's yo, uso Siaki about to write about what's going down wit me. Well my public defender came and talked to me about how he tried his best to get my sentencing pushed down a couple of years, 'cause I was looking at 23 years. He wrote a long ass report about me and my life. Now they (the court) is talking sixteen years for me. But I will only do like twelve years 'cause I been in here for two years already so I ain't even trippin'. But anyways what can I do? Shhh, I just gonna hurry up and slap those years on my sleeves and get back out there and make some babies (you feel).

So Beat we will see soon about my case. I'll keep yall posted. Alright. Gone.

Fa'a (bye).

-Giant Samoa

From The Beat: Appreciate the update. Any news yet? Twelve years is a lot of time, but at least you have a date, and you will still be one hell of a young man ready to handle business when your freedom. Don't throw your gifts away to the system, you already have given them some great years! Use your time wisely!

"I Might Get Out"

Hey Beat, what's up. This is your girl Bayby-G dropping a couple of lines for ya'll to read. Well anyway Beat, about to cut this short, so - just to break it down to you and let you know I might get out this Monday, if everything goes well. But anyway, much love to all locked up. Keep your head up high.

-Baybe-G

From The Beat: Hey, you "cut this short" before you even got started. We're only printing your note to let you know, and all Beat writers know, that we're looking for substance. Our readers really want to know what's happening with you. Saying hello and goodbye in a line or two doesn't give us much to wrap our ears and eyes around. We're glad that you'll probably get out. But we want to know what makes you tick, how you feel, what you're going to do to get it all together. OK....

My Life Is OK!

Just because I play football and I work hard in school and get good grades in school, but for some reason I feel like I am not doing enough in my life.

I try to do as good as I can but I ever get there but I still try my best and that is why I am going to Wyoming to play football!

-J.J

From The Beat: Good luck in Wyoming, and while you're there, make sure you do some hiking and camping. There are skies and mountains there that will make your jaw drop to the floor.

The Best Book, "The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member."

Monster is the best book I ever read. I recommend it to all readers. It's a true life of a gangster. I don't wanna give up the story so you can all enjoy it. I read it and learned a lot from it - how he changed his life after going in and out of jail and prison. It's a true story that took place in L.A. He's a good writer. He knows how to take you inside the story. As if you were there, in person, with him. His name Sanyika Shakur, AkA Monster Kody Scott - The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member.

-Eva

From The Beat: We've heard a lot about this book, and we agree it's a mighty powerful read. Thanks for the recommendation, Eva. Keep reading. You really can read yourself out of trouble and into a new life. Ask us for a reading list, if you'd like one.



Under My Wing

Today I am talking about taking some one under your wing. So with me I fill like some of the staff at the j-hall took me under their wing cause they're like a family to me. They take care of me, discipline me and we have some laughs here and there. They make me feel safe but they can't replace my real family, 'cause I have too much family love.

I took friends and family under my wing when they needed it the most. I also took a kid under and took care of her while I had my son and nine brothers and sister. It's good taking care of a lil' one again. It feels good, to show them right from wrong and support them.

-Lil' Dreamer

From The Beat: Not only does it feel good, but it's also the greatest gift you can give another person, and also yourself, to show them right from wrong, teach them how to be a good human being. Who in your life did the best to teach YOU right from wrong?

Private Lawyer

I've been here for three months. It feels like this is my home. I don't want to think of it that way. Well, I have a private lawyer. He helps a lot for me. My pops cashed-out for him. The only reason he did that is he wants me to have a better chance to get out. My pops and I do lots of things, even though he is not able to. He is always there for me. I love my pops.

-Spectrum-Gadget

From The Beat: You're lucky to have such a wonderful dad, Spectrum, and it's really good that you have a lawyer to represent you. Although you have been in juvy a long time now, please don't think of it as your home. That's called being "institutionalized" and some young people, adults too, get so used to having everything—meals, clean clothes, etc. provided for them, that once they're free again, they don't make sure they stay free, and end up back in juvy, where they feel secure. Don't let this happen to you.

Nicky Cruz Transformed

The best book I have ever read was about some guy named Nicky Cruz. He killed lots of people. He was a gang member. His mom was a witch who told Nicky he was the son of the devil. He was born in Puerto Rico. He was the leader of the New York gang. He killed this boy and left him in this place that was abandoned. He brought some of his homies and cut his finger and buried him alive.

His father was from church and he came to talk to Nicky, but Nicky told him, "Go," and spit in his face and told his father if he didn't go, he was going to kill him.

When he was a little boy, he killed a lot of cops. Everyone was scared of him. Now he is older and he changed, and now he goes to church and tells kids to not gangbang and to go to school. And it was a true story.

-Andrea

From The Beat: Nicky Cruz now has a whole outreach program to help troubled teenagers across the US. Thank you so much to writing about him. Has reading about him taught you anything you could apply to the decisions you face in your own life? If so, why don't you write about them next week for The Beat?

Juvy Helped Me Quit Smoking Weed

We used to smoke weed. When I was out, I was smoke weed every day with my homies and I was doing some wrong stuff and my family, they try to help me quit smoke, but I can't. So now, when I was out, I got different kind of problems, for used to weed (using weed.) I was thinking I can never stop smoke weed, but now I got a long time locked up.

I speak with my family and my girlfriend and I feel good, feel like I don't need it any more and I thinking whenever the police arrest you and you in a juvenile, it's a change to you. You clean yourself and start over and when you get out, you stop doing drugs and stop doing bullshhhh and spend more time with your family and your relationship with your family be fine, and you will see how the things change and you will see you never come back to the jail. And you' family gonna try and help you more and your best friends and girlfriend gonna try an' help to you, because they really love you and you will see who's really your friend.

Now I feel good, because I go' quit doing drugs. My family tryna help me and I got new friends and my girlfriend love me and everything is possible if you want to change. This is my story.

-Payaso

From The Beat: Good story! It's great that because you have no access to drugs in juvy, that now you know you can manage without them! Was something messing with your head, when you felt you needed to smoke all the time? If so, can you maybe talk to a counselor in juvy about it? Get any help you need now. Congratulations on your newly found strength!

Why My Life Went To Hell

What up, Beat?

I sit alone in a four-corned cell
Thinking about why my life went to hell

I'll tell you why

It's because I decided to vandalize

I'm not proud of what I did

Because it landed me in jail

I don't even have a bail

Family can't put money on my books

Inside, you have to watch your looks

Throw the wrong ones

And you end up chunkin' it

Now I just think, "Forget it"

What happens happens

It's all for a reason

On the run from this county

Kickin' it in that county

Sheriff's lookin' for me

They put a bounty

Now I'm back in jail

Thinking whatever I can think

-Kool Aid

From The Beat: Of course you're probably not to happy about being in juvy, but how do you feel about whoever owned the property you vandalized? Who is the victim here? But you, like everybody in juvy, do have problems, like how to manage with strangers who may be offended by "mad" looks or looks they don't understand.

A Tribute To A Favorite Staff

Man, I'm in the halls, holdin' it down. Seventeen, and tryin' to get on a whole new hype. But, yeah, I was facin' sixteen and a half, then I got this PO. She was mean, from what I heard. They charged me as an adult, because I was sixteen at the time, and if you didn't know already, this town is racist, so all us young dread heads that come out of Marin City, which is the only all-Black community in Marin County.

Off top, when we go out and commit a murder, robbery or steal a stolen car, in this county, they gonna wash you. So me and my bra hit a lick and was charged with first degree armed robbery, which was considered five felonies. So I was lightweight, feelin' beat up, because sixteen years is all that I been on this earth, and that what they wanna give me. So I kept it real militant, stayed solid, and my moms hired a dummy ass good attorney, so I knew I was on and wouldn't go down without a fight.

By now I'm going to court. I must have went to court ten times in less than three weeks, for nothing. So my attorney started waving time and I was in here for nine months straight, until it was time for a PO to write my court report, and at the Marin County halls, sometimes POs work as staff on the weekends, so it was this one particular PO I was dummy ass cool with, because she always kept it solid, and I kept asking her, could she be my PO? (And praying she could, but she said they had one assigned to me already, which was the mean one.)

But all my praying eventually paid off. She was crossing the mean PO's office one day and they talked and the mean one decided to give my case to her. And long story short, she put her job on the line to save me, and I got released with a deal for YA suspension and five years probation. That's my favorite staff PO.

-Henny

From The Beat: You are so lucky. It's like a miracle you aren't sitting in YA today. But why don't you examine what you wrote? Why should the Marin County authorities, or any authorities, go easy on anyone committing serious crimes? And why should anyone, including you, get off easily on robbery or GTO (grand theft auto) charges? You seem grateful for your PO, attorney and anyone who helped you, but what have you learned? Because you got a huge, some say miraculous, break, will you stay cool and out of any trouble? Or will your luck go to your head, make you feel invincible, and give you a false sense of security and the feeling you can get over on anybody, any time? Can you stop playing people, including yourself? Or can you be real with everybody?

Why Are We Coming Back?

The thing I don't understand, is, "Why do I come back?" I thought about it and I thought sometimes my lifestyle I live is too stressful. I have to be away from the thing that is stressful. Well, for me, it's my home and it feels so good to just leave and kick it with my friends. I like leaving so much, I don't come home 'til it's past my curfew. I just mess up on my curfew violations, nothing else, so I understand why I come back to the hall, but at the same time I'm confused, saying, "Why can't I stop?" I can't stop, 'cause I love feeling good an' free. I guess I also used this place to get away when things get too stressful.

-Annie

From The Beat: If whatever's going on in your home is so upsetting to you that it's driving you out of the house and into juvy, it sounds serious. What do you think might be a good remedy, so your family and you can live together in peace? Family counseling? Why don't you talk to your counselor in juvy and get her/his opinion about what steps to take?

A Time I Was Stranded

One night, it was around 11:30, I was hanging out with my friend, Kyle, and my friend, Nate, came to meet us.

Once Nate was there, we wanted to go on some sort of an adventure but couldn't figure out where to go.

Kyle was originally from Fresno, but moved to Marin when he was younger. He still had friends there, so we decided to go here. Normally it's a four-hour drive. We left around 12:00 am and arrived about six that morning.

On the way we got lost in a cornfield or something. On the way back we ran out of gas, so we tried to siphon some, but it didn't work.

-Eric

From The Beat: So what happened? Why were you driving around in a cornfield? How did you finally get some gas, so you could keep driving? How did you get home?

NEW MEXICO

Stranded Cause Of The Crime

The last time I Felt stranded was when I did my last crime that got me in "BCJDC", and what I did was very dangerous to most people. If your in a gang that would be considered putting in dirt or earning your strips. The crime I did was 'kidnapping and armed robbery'.

It wasn't my first crime I did just to let you know, but anyways, I felt really stranded when I did it or during the wild and crazy act. We came up on a plasma TV, DVD's, CD's, laptop, PS2, games and that was about it.

I wouldn't have got caught if I or me and my homies went back for the car, and right then and there I got caught then couldn't do anything else besides get arrested.

-Sabbi Jim

From the Beat: Sabbi it doesn't sound like you were stranded, it sounds more like you just got caught committing a crime? It also sounds like being in a gang is only getting you behind bars and nothing more. Thank your lucky stars that you or your "homies" didn't kill someone while committing this crime.

Taking Someone Under Your Wing

See I use to look up to my homie Mosoco and the homie lil' S 'cause every time I hit them up and things were going down they were there for me, and would never let things happen to me and they always put in work for me. Helping me when I don't have money, and calling to check up on me just to see if I'm alright.

Now were all locked up and there's nothing I can do to change it. But I wish I could. We'll I got to let you go Beat, much Amor and respect.

-Delinquent

From The Beat: It's good that you have someone to look up to or to have some one take you under their wing. The ones that take you under their wing should be helping you stay out of trouble, not "putting in work for you" they should be there to see you stay out of lock up, and not getting you and themselves locked up.

Your Eyes / My Eyes

In your eyes you probably see me as a gang banger or a thug,

but in my eyes I see myself as a smart and talented young man who has lots of love.

Your eyes only see the negative things in my life.

My eyes see positive things like me loving my son and making his mother my wife.

In your eyes you see me getting nowhere, but in my eyes I see me getting somewhere, and I know I will

'cause God will lead me there.

So please people, stop going by what your eyes tell you.

Follow the Lord and His word, and you'll be happy with what he brings you.

-Curtus

From The Beat: Well spoken words Curtus, but remember you are also being judge by your actions not just by what we see on the surface. If you continue to get into trouble and commit crimes, people will see you as a "gang banger or a thug", because that is the portrait you are painting for ever one to see. Make a change, take care of your son, and marry your girl, get a honest paying job and as you said "God will lead you there".

Writing A Letter To My Family Before I Die

I use this tale 'cause I knew it would catch your eye. This is what I would want my family to know...

Don't cry when I die, it was my time to go, so wipe your tears and know I was a 'G' and I will always be in your heart.

If I die would the boys be down to ride for me? Just remember that I love you and I would always ride with you no matter what. If bullets fly I'll jump in the way for you 'cause that's how much I love you, so when you think of looking up in the sky and know I'm looking right down on you.

Although I'll be a ghost, I'll still be able to cause trouble, just like 2Pac say, "I see death around the way. When I die paint my coffin blue and gray and I'll always love you."

Well this is the end of this letter, Amor and most respect to The Beat Within.

- Delinquent

From The Beat: It's a shame that you are already writing your obituary at such a young age. You should be writing about life, love and happiness, not about death. You have a chance now to change your ways so you can live life to its fullest, and now worry about what lies around the next corner.

Stranded At Walden House/Halls

I'm stranded, here at the Walden feeling mad, angry, man I'm stranded. At first feeling stranded didn't know what to do here. Right now I'm feeling better sober still here hangin' in there doin' my thang. At the same time I feel like my mom is stranded without me. Just hope my bruh's get out, I wish the best for them right now 'cause they still in there stranded.

I know y'all stranded. My other bruh man is my man stranded he can't do nothing right now just like me. Can't get out still sitting here stranded. At least I'm letting them know they're not the only ones. I was feeling the same way at the halls couldn't do nothing just talk to my roommate, reading a book waiting for my phone call. Wake up the next morning tryin' to get a P.O. call. But they hating can't get out of the hall. Man, I was trying to get out I'm tired of seeing the walls. At least I'm sitting with, chillin' with the bruh, see you when I get out bruh's. Hope to see y'all make a change feel good about yourselves. I'ma catch y'all later.

-Combo

From The Beat: We probably would've enjoyed this piece a little more than we already did if you would've focused more on you than on your bruh's. Have you ever felt stranded without being incarcerated? Now that incarceration is causing you to feel stranded, what do you think are some ways you can make sure you won't ever feel stranded again?

Ain't Coming Back

Man I've been in the box three times and every time I tell myself I ain't going back. I stay sleeping and reading all day. And when I'm not I think back about them long nights on the block. How I went from a little to a lot. I use my time wisely, by writing and calling all my loved ones you feel me.

It's hectic on the outs so I make sure the goons are smoothies. But after I knock out my lil' four to six months I'm on my shhh and ain't coming back! Afta that I'm knocking out my probation out the way and bouncing back like what's up mane!

-Joe Dirt

From The Beat: What makes saying, "I ain't comin' back," this time different than the other three times? What are you doing different this time than you weren't before? It's a pleasure to hear you're writing and reading. How do you think these skills will assist you once you're finally out?

My Stressful Life

Was up Beat this be yo' boy Grumpy! I'm stressing a lot fo' reals I'm in this group home I lost a lot things in my life. I lost my job being with my fam and my girl. I'm stressing a lot 'cause people in here ain't supportive like some staff in here be hating and talking more than anything.

I'm up in here thinking about being with my mom, brothers and friends. Being at school. I lost my lil bro to the streets that's what kills me more and stress me out a lot. I can't stand people in here they talk hella shhh fo' reals but they never do nada (nothing).

Another thing that gets me mad is when they tell you that you can't do shhh like getting a job or going home because the levels that you have to go through. (Can't even get no phone calls, send email shhh that's messed up but I guess I'm living a crazy and stressful life. I just wish my baby girl was around to calm me down and cool my stress down well I'm out.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Will you remember all this stress once you get out, so you can remember how bad you never wanted to come back? What do you do when you're stressed out to ease the stress? Do you work out, write, or read? What takes the stress away?

Unorganized

Right now I'm at the Walden House. The program isn't really organized and isn't set up for us. The only thing they have is hella groups. I'm doing my thing but it's very stressful being very close to my house. I always get challenged 'specially when there are new kids comin'. This place isn't really cool but it's easy if you're on your toes and doing it right. To be real we as clients be having it cracking and it be cool. But I have it hard because they have high expectations of me.

I'm the oldest one here and some clients think it's the shhh to be me because I have some sort of power here. I get to leave the Walden House on the weekdays to go to college but they think it's easy but when it's time to go back I don't want to but I have to because I'm trying to fight a trial over a fight I had the night before I came to the Walden House.

They are trying to give me a strike but I'm not falling for that shhh, they told me that his mouth got wired and he's eating from a straw, all that is bs. All of that is stressful being in here everyday but I just need to go through this program and try to get some skills and knowledge. All of the staff keep telling me to keep doing good so it can look good in my court. This place is helping a little but I have lots of responsibilities and lots of weight on my shoulders, I just have to do what I gotta do to have a successful program. Stay up!!!

-Serg

From The Beat: Yeah, with privileges and power comes great responsibility and expectations. Do you think it's good that people expect so much from you? Do people's expectations of you match your own expectations of yourself? What are your expectations and are you fulfilling them?



Kafir Boy

The best book I have ever read was called Kafir Boy. It was about apartheid in South Africa, and how the police would raid peoples houses and beat people, and arrest them if they didn't have papers. And how it was hard for kids to go to school.

-Late

From The Beat: This sounds like a really good book, can you tell us more about it because we're really interested in it?

Doing Things I Hardly Ever Do

When I get locked up or get sent to group home's I try to do things that I hardly ever do. For one I get a book and just read as much as I can. I do this so I can get knowledge, because when I'm on the outs I hardly ever go to school, I'm always out doing dumb things that keep getting me locked up.

Also I always go to school so while I'm there I learn 'cause when I'm out I don't really be going to school. But what I do mainly while I'm locked up I always be working out because that's what helps me not get so stressed out. That's what I do when I'm at the Walden everyday work out, I be getting so stressed out in here I feel like running but I don't because it would make moms sad. Also while I'm here at the Walden I'ma just try to do good so I can get out.

-Late

From The Beat: Well, it sounds like your making the most of your time while locked up. What will it take for you to go to school on the outs, so you don't have to keep getting locked up to get your diploma or GED? Is there any way we can help at The Beat?

Using My Time

I am up here at the Walden House doing cool using my time efficiently like lifting weights, eatin' hella much, waitin' for my ninjas to come up here and knock they time out like me. Other things they having us do is going to boxing and some other things later on in the program, but its cool. To all my ninja coming to the Walden it's crackin'.

-Daddy-O

From The Beat: This is one of those pieces that we think had great potential, but didn't meet that potential. How is using your time at Walden House going to affect what you do once you get out? Are you planning to get out and stay out or get out and go back to the same thing you were doing when you got locked up?

My Lil Bro

My lil bro was the one and only best friend I had. I miss him even more when I think about him. I remember when we use to go chill at my house drinking, partying with girls. We used to have all the parties crackin' fo' reals fo' reals. I remember when he was at my house and he started eaten all my food that's hella funny fo' reals.

But one day this one that killed me bad was a day I'ma never forget. I was with my girl on the bus going to my house and she seen my lil bro and she told me there's your homie. I got of the bus and we was talking. He was telling me that he wanted me to let him borrow a CD. I said yeah don't trip. The next day I get a phone call early in the morning. They told me the bad news that he got shot at and he passed away.

My heart dropped I couldn't believe it I thought they was playing I didn't know what to do or believe. I hung up the phone and called my mom. I told her what they told me. She called my best friends mom. It was true when I heard her cry I hung up the phone and I went home. Man all I gotta say is that I love my lil' bro and miss him. Rest in paradise lil homie we will never forget you. I miss my lil' bro and I'ma do the right thing for you and keep my head up looking up to the sky, cause I know you looking down on me and watching over me.

My life has changed since you left us. Things will never be the same with you not here. Things are not the same for me I feel something missin' and that is you lil' bro.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Damn, that's a very sad story and we're very sorry to hear about your best friend. If he could talk to you at this very moment, what do you think he would say about you being in Walden House? How were you able to deal with the loss? We think it takes a tremendous amount of courage to write about something so dear to you. Thank you for sharing...

VOICES IN SPANISH

En La Carcel

Hola me llamo Anderson y les voy a contar como me la paso en la carcel. Yo me la paso durmiendo. Me la paso leyendo libros de lecturas bonitas que no te aburran. Libros que te olviden que estas en la carcel. Libros que te saquen de la mente y me la paso leyendo libros. Lo mas importante de la mas lindo que tenemos todos los humanos.

From The Beat: Esta bien joven que estudies! Que aprendes de los libros que lees? Cual es tu favorito?

Being Locked Up

Hi. My name is Anderson and I'm gonna tell you how it is being locked up. All I do is sleep. I also read some good literature. I read books that are so good they make me forget that I am locked up. But the most beautiful thing that we have amongst us is us human beings.

-Anderson, San Francisco

From The Beat: That's wonderful that you like to read. We are impressed. What do you learn from the books you read? Which one is your favorite?

Perdoname Pero

Bueno lo siento pero esta vez no voy a escribir nada, por que de que servi escribir algo si nunca lo publican. Cual es el chiste entonces? Siempre escrito cosas muy importantes pero esta vez no lo voy hacer. Tal vez por que no lo hago en ingles.

From The Beat: Perdon! Para decirte la verdad no avia nadie trabajando para publicar lo que estava escrito en español. Hasta Ahorita. So denos un chance para recuperar, por que estamos atrasado por unos cuantos meces.

Sorry But...

I don't think I'm gonna write anything because what's the use of writing something if you guys never publish it. What's the point? Is it a joke?! I've always written important things but this time I'm not gonna do it. Is it maybe 'cause I didn't write it in English.

-Jose, San Francisco

From The Beat: We apologize if you haven't seen any of your writing published. To be honest with you, we haven't had anybody able to translate and edit the Spanish pieces, until now. We are behind a couple months but we are slowly catching up.

Secrets

What we do when we're alone is a secret,
(like me nibbling on your ear).
You were a good girlfriend.
My eyes get glassy when I think of you.
It was a mistake when I let you go.
I dream of having a chance to get you back.

-Nesio

From The Beat: Hey, we don't usually print love poems. We'd rather that you send them directly to the object of your affection. But this is pretty cool, so we make this exception.

Gift

A gift,
a wish,
a dream
that the world has given me.
A treasure,
a path,
a way
that will lead me on
a journey.

-Aeron

From The Beat: We wish you a good and an interesting trip.

Alice In Wonderland

The best book I ever read was "Alice In Wonderland". I read it last week. It was all nonsense. It did not teach me anything. I don't want to give you details about it because I recommend that you read it yourself. Take a look in a book, a reading rainbow.

-Jackson

From The Beat: We take it you like that the book did not teach you anything. We're guessing you mean in the sense that a textbook teaches. You may discover later that you did in fact learn something from Alice In Wonderland. Have you ever read a book twice, or three times? A good book doesn't wear out, you know. It deepens with each rereading.

Sorry

I've said the word sorry so many times, and most of those times I didn't mean it. I don't believe other people when they say sorry. They just try to make you feel good. I've told the judge sorry so many times for the crap I've done, but I didn't mean it. I said it because I wanted to be released. But when I say the word to one of my family members, or somebody I care about, I mean it.

-Duncan

From The Beat: What would it take for you to mean it whenever you said it? If you don't mean it, don't say it. That's our advice. We suspect the judge has a pretty good ear for a false sorry.

My Apology

Recently I went to court and the victims were in court to testify against me, and I apologized to them. It didn't get me released, but I still felt better after that. And the staff are saying they knew I was serious and that that will help the judge when he makes a decision on sentencing me. I hope that he sends me home.

-Jose

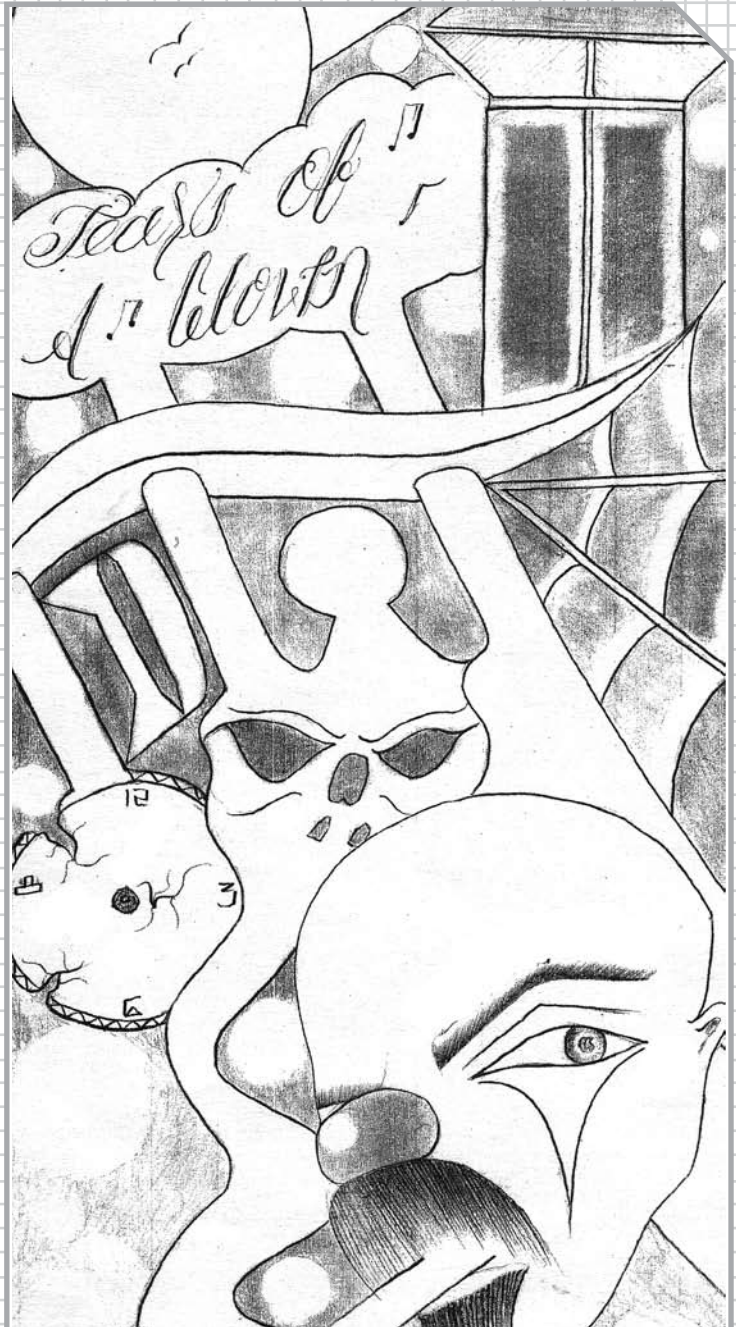
From The Beat: We don't know who said that confession is good for the soul, but we suspect that a genuine apology is good for it too. We're glad you owned up and apologized, and we're glad it made you feel better to do it.

Tomorrow

Tomorrow will be my court date. I think I am probably going to get out and go to a foster home. If I don't get out, I won't trip because this place is like my second home.

-Sergio

From The Beat: Well, we hope you do get out and that you like your foster home. We know that Santa Cruz Juvy is a good place but we hope you don't come to think of it as your second home.



Doing Time

Well, I'm using my time by reading and working out. When I get downtime, it sucks. We only eat three meals a day. The staff here is cool. You can watch TV and play games like foosball, basketball, football and ping pong.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Hey - how many meals a day are you used to?

Hating Is Discriminating

I hate the haters who hate the hated
Only hating on other, 'cause in their minds, hate was created

Why do they hate on one another?

He's doing better than him, so he hates his brother
Jealousy is what creates hate and is what fuels the hater
All a hater is, is a discriminator

-Mistro

From The Beat: You've packed so much meaning into this very tight poem. We take our hats off to you for the skills you exhibit in writing this. Where do you fit into your poem? What or who do you hate? How was that hate created in your mind?

Just Let My Brother Be

Right now my time is going by slow. I just can't wait to get out. I got a year in here, but that's really nothing.

My brother is locked up in county right now. He's getting out in January 1, 2008, but he's gonna get deported back to Mexico. He's writing to me and he's telling me how messed up that is. He's been in the USA since he was six weeks old. He has a wife and he just had a baby on August 26, 2007. He was in jail when the baby was born. He wishes he could have been there, but he couldn't.

Many people's lives are bad and they want others to feel sorry them. My brother just wants people to let him be. My brother is a soldier on the inside and outside. He just wants to get out and start over. I want to do the same. I look up to my brother. I want to be a good person. Hopefully I keep my mind on that.

-Smokey

From The Beat: It's truly messed up that people who had no choice in coming here illegally (no six-weeks-old child has a choice) still have to pay the price of our immigration laws. Of course, if your brother had not done whatever it was that led him to jail, then he wouldn't be facing deportation because the government wouldn't know about him. So while we put the responsibility for our stupid immigration laws on the government, we put the responsibility for his going to jail on him (unless, of course, he was there for not having the right immigration papers). Anyway, we're sorry about your brother but we hope you keep to your promise to be a good person. That's truly important.

My Daughter Has Changed My Life

I been locked up since May 5th. All this time I been here is making me change my life. I've changed in many ways. One thing I changed is my attitude and how to respect adults and the opposite gangs.

The reason that I changed is because my lil' daughter. She was born a month ago. I wasn't able to be there when she was born, and that's another reason why I'm trying to change my life.

When I came here, I thought I was going to get out soon, but when I went to court, they was trying to give me eighteen months at ROP, but I ended up going back to court and they ended up sentencing me back to Camp. This is also another reason why I'm changing, but to me, my daughter is more important, and the reason why I'm changing is because of my daughter.

-Lil' Red

From The Beat: We can think of no better reason to change your attitude (which means changing almost everything) than in order to be a real father to your little girl. The gangs can live without you (and you can live without them). But your little girl needs a father in her life, and that is not just a man who made her, but a man who stands by her and guides her toward a better life than you've had until now. There will be many temptations for you to fall back to your old ways, and they will be difficult to resist. But they will come and go, while your daughter will always be there. We hope you are able to be there for her, too. Good luck.

Juvenile Hell

I don't know why I'm here
I don't belong in a place like this
I don't think this is fair
But this place, to me, is juvenile hell

I think what I did was right
I think if we were animals, I would be taking her under my paw
I think you gotta do what you gotta do, even if it means to fight
But you end up in a place like this, when your actions don't abide by the law

Next time hate won't overcome my thought
Next time I'ma think before I take action
Next time it's gonna take a lot of courage to fight off hate
But next time I'ma be in a home of my satisfaction

This is a lesson learned to me
This is a place I never wanted to be
This is a place where you miss the most important thing
That so-called "thing" is family

I'd rather be with family who protected my life
I'd rather be with the girl I consider my wife
I'd try and protect her with my life

-Justin

From The Beat: In this fine poem, you've laid out the dilemma you face — upholding the law of the street or the law of the state when the two are in conflict. This is a tough dilemma to solve because, as you have learned, there are consequences to whichever choice you make. But if you want to stay with your family and your girl, it seems pretty clear what laws you're going to have to live with. We wish you good luck in acting on the lessons you've learned.

Almost Home

Yeah, I'm almost home. Just another week.
I've been down for a few months. Down to the last few days.

I have a son. He's almost six months old.
So far I have missed over half his life due to my stupidity.

I was on the run, just doin' what I do,
not realizing what it would all lead up to.
I've made a promise to my son, as well as to myself,
to never jeopardize us being together again.
I know I will have to change a lot of my ways,
but that I am more than willing to change,
'cause no matter how many moves I make
and how much money I can have, none of that is worth me being a fake.

I made a promise and I'm sticking to it.
I ain't never again puttin' my son through it.
You could call me a phony, you could call me a fake
But the game and that life, I'm finna shake

-Justin

From The Beat: Oh no, you're neither a phony nor a fake! You're very, very real. Sometimes it takes looking into the eyes of those we are responsible for bringing into the world and caring for to understand what we owe ourselves. It seems to us, from your words, that you have not only given your son life, but he has given you new life as well. It won't be easy, but the rewards for him and for you will be worth every effort you make. Thank you for this.

We Hate What We Fear

Why do we hate what we don't understand or what we feel, deep down, is threatening? Because it is natural to fear the unknown and often we hate what we fear. We must understand this. Hate will consume you and I. It will blacken your soul and mind. Hate has led to literally millions of deaths, including the Holocaust.

Think, when Hitler was young, he had great potential as a statesman, but hate for those not like him consumed him and turned him into the person we see him as. However, make no mistake, Hitler was a blight upon the world, but this is only because of hate.

Stop hate within yourself. You can't change others, only yourself, and hope they follow your example. Let your hate turn to love. For love, be it for God or man, will save your soul from evil. Life: Dei gratia—by the grace of God.

(NOTE: A seraphim is the highest of angels, and stands in the presence of God.)

-Seraphim

From The Beat: We appreciate this moral lesson on hate, and we agree with you. We hate what we fear, and we fear what we don't understand. But we wish you would bring this down to the your own experiences and life. What do you hate? How has that hate affected you, or hurt you and others? How are you trying to turn that hate to love? Have you had any success?

A Sad Good-bye

A sad goodbye was when I lost my auntie.
I had gone to Mexico hella mad and grumpy.
There's so many words that I wanted to say.
I wish my auntie was alive an' wit' me today.

She gave me good advice, an' taught me right from wrong.

I know I'ma see her once again soon, not too long.
I think about her when I listen to her favorite track.
It's been four years now; I wish I can bring her back.
I really miss her, an' it's kinda hard to move on.
I try to stay strong, but can't believe she's gone.
When I get out of jail, I'ma do right and not act like a beast.

So now I just say, Aunt Raquel, rest in peace.

-Mousie

From The Beat: It sounds like your Auntie taught you well/You're lucky that you had an Auntie Raquel/Now it's up to you to follow her advice/ And turn your life from mean to nice!

Trapped

We're trapped in the game
Always getting locked up
And putting my mother through some shame
Gangs and probation don't mix
It's a problem that I cannot fix
I like the lifestyle
But I can't make my mother to smile
So I can't do the things that I want
Without losing
But it's all up to my own choosing

-Macias

From The Beat: Your analysis is right on the money, Macias. You're right — you cannot make your mother happy while also serving the gang. But beyond the gang and what they want for and from you, and beyond your mother and what she wants for and from you, what do you want for and from yourself? Being your own man, independent of the expectations of others, is a very hard thing to accomplish, but very much worth the effort.

Lapse

People always say that they have been through the same things that I have faced, but I tell them, "How are you going to say that, if you don't even know what I have faced?" Many things that I have faced, not even grown men/women have gone through. You know why? Because everybody's story can't be the same, because then it would not be their story.

As I was growing up, I didn't have a dad around to show me how things should go on and how things should not go on. It was just my mom, sisters, and my brother and me. We did not always get what, when or who we wanted. Things came and went. I come from a family that is on Section 8 housing and all. For a kid growing up in the projects, it was hard for me to learn the dos and the don'ts, because who was there to teach me? Myself. I was not just a kid that wanted to just have fun, I wanted everything that I saw, and when I was little, when things did not come to me, I would take them. By taking things, I did not learn how to work for things that I wanted in life.

As a restitution for my actions, I am locked up, because there was nobody there to say, "Leave that alone. Work for your own toys—that's not yours," and so on. As I got older, the things that I started to take started to go with what people of my age had, which were the most popular at that time.

Anyway, so when people say that they have been through experiences like me, I ask myself, "Do they really think that they can just compare their life to mine when, as the world goes on, things change?" Also, the things that I choose to do are not hobbies, it's just the things that I am used to doing.

People always say that I try to justify my actions towards using it in somebody else's action, then just explaining mine. As all have been said, just try and listen, because there is always more to the story than told.

-Kabb

From The Beat: You have told your story very well, even though you are right, there is always more that has not been told. Here's the thing: You are no longer the child that had no one to show you right from wrong (even thought that child is still inside you). You are maturing into a real man, one who is able to look deep within himself and see why things are not as they should be. That is a strength that not everybody can draw on, so we hope that what you have seen and what you understand about what you have seen will be enough to change the path you've been on. You have much to teach, and while we encourage you to continue doing it in these pages, there are doors for you to open for yourself that will lead to many beneficial things in many people's lives. Continue to open the doors of your mind, and we believe that will lead you to those other doors — the ones on the other side of these four walls. This is a great piece of writing!

An Act Of Courage

An act of courage
It's an act of strength
An act of wisdom
And an act of bravery
An act of courage...
It's an act for a greater good
An act of someone in need
An act of leadership
An act of courage...
Is standing up for a friend
Looking after family
Helpin' someone in need

-Young Kon

From The Beat: This is beautifully put together. Have you ever performed an act of courage? What was it?

Possible Future

I'm out for good, never to return
 I've done eight months, my lesson I've learned
 I'm hooked with a house, school, and job
 So I'm not going to come back and look like a slob
 And when you get out. I hope you don't come back,
 either
 Because you don't need to give in to every little teaser
 But while you are in, go to The Beat Within
 Because no matter what, they listen
 It also feels good to let it all out
 So when you get out, you can go in the right direction
 With no doubt

-Wilson

From The Beat: We think you have the most important ingredient of all for a successful future, and that is the attitude you bring to it. Thank you for the kind words about The Beat, but, of course, without you (all), there would be no Beat. So thank you, and stick to your plan. One last word: The Beat is always open to you, wherever you are and whatever you're doing. Write us and we'll publish what you write in the back (Beat Without) section. Good luck!

Guess My Thought

This "school" teaches me nothing
 How sweet the sound of lies makes me smile
 Has not proms'd good to me
 But I don't blame, nor care
 This paper might be read or lost in the stack
 But, who cares?
 I write with the assurance of my own prediction
 It's funny now, sad later
 But as I am in the present
 The thought of the futures makes me laugh and smile to
 myself
 Bringing delight to my heart
 Emotion holds people back
 I must learn to "act" like you
 Hillcrest Juvenile Hall
 The worst place of them all
 Exclude how I hate it
 But its appearance when it falls
 Will you go out of business?
 No, crime pays.
 Stupid criminals don't think, and they'll never change
 their ways...
 Ignorance and lack of knowledge keeps these places up
 and running
 Acquire those above and more
 Then you know... you know...
 This thought humors me
 And leaves you in curiosity
 Do not explore satisfaction
 To your wonders or question
 Just act as if...
 As if you never read this...
 That is—if you already have...

-Chavail

From The Beat: Well, yes, we have already read this, and it is very hard for us not to "explore satisfaction" by trying to understand what all your words mean. We see some profound thinking in this poem, and we also see some things which we can only guess are profound because they're written in ways that you understand but we may not. You're right that crime pays. In fact, there is a thriving industry in America that depends on crime. If all crime were to stop today, the economy would collapse tomorrow! But that, of course, is not what this is about. This is about you, and your relationship to this criminal-industrial complex. Since it will never go out of business, our question can only be, will you get out of the business of crime and stop feeding the beast? You've clearly got the brains to do it. Do you have the heart?

Signs

It has been ten months since I have been locked up. As time goes by, I realized that I have wasted my entire teenage life coming and going in and out of this juvenile hall. But this time has really made an impact on my life. At this time that I am writing this letter, I am serving a year sentence for possession of a shotgun and meth. I really have no reason why I had the shotgun, and I have been thinking what I would have done to a person if they had crossed my path. I am going to take you, as the reader, on a ride that is a non-stop, troubled life.

Just think that it could have been worse. Ever since I was able to leave the house, at times that I was supposed to have fun, I really was out to see what I could get into. The first time that I was outside, when the streetlights came on, it seemed as if everybody was in a hurry to get inside the house, or tryin' to look for their kids to bring them inside, as well. But, anyway, as I was walking the streets, it was about 8:30-9:00, time for me to be in the house. But at the age that I was at, it did not cross my mind that it was time.

As I was walking home, I saw a person that had a ski mask on his face walking toward me, and I felt as if we locked eyes. As he got closer, I looked down and realized that the person was me, but I was older, and I was mad at the fact that when reality kicked in, that it was not in person, but it was a dream and I was reliving the day that I almost lost my life to being out too late with my hood over my head, that it looked as if I was wearing a mask. As I was lying there in my sleep, that's when it hit me—my little man, AKA me, was stopped at the sound of gunshots moving past me at a speed that I cannot even describe, and the only thing that came to my head was that I should run. As I was about to run, my body would not let me. It was like when you were a little kid. You woke up in the middle of the night and everybody was asleep and you had to go pee, but could not move.

As the car that was releasing the rounds that were meant to hit me, all I did was have lots of thoughts that I was about to end my life that I just started. But then, out of nowhere, I started to run and let me tell you, I ran like I was the fastest person alive. As I was running, I realized that if I run to my house, that would not be safe and that they would know where I live, so I just ran for about two blocks before I realized that I had lost whoever that was that was shooting at me. As I came to a stop, I realized that it was all a dream. Just think, it could have been you.

-Kabb

From The Beat: We're sure you understand that this dream was trying to tell you something important. If nothing else, it was trying to tell you that you matter to yourself, and that you want to live. To be honest, what frightened us most was not the dream itself but the thought of what might have happened if you had used that shotgun you were caught with. If that had happened (and just being in possession of a gun makes people do things they wouldn't do otherwise), your life would effectively be over, one way or another. So no, it wasn't ALL a dream. Some of it was too real, and it's that reality we hope you are thinking long and hard about.

Courage Runs Deep

Thinking about the way people say it supposed to be, they say you have courage 'cause you stand up for what you believe in. But I think that it's deeper than that. Courage is something that you have deep in your heart, something that you do and things that you can say.

When I think about courage, I sometimes think that it comes from out of nowhere and it overwhelms me, but I like it and it keeps me thinkin'. If I didn't have courage, where would I be? Probably dead or worse. So courage is good to me in tough times.

And, think about it, courage don't cost a thing. It's free. The first time I had a moment when courage came to me is when I took up for my little sister. My sister came to me saying that she was being messed wit', and then she said who it was and I took it upon myself to help her. I got into a fight with the guy and I won. After, the guy never messed wit' my lil' sis again.

-Nile

From The Beat: We like the way you put it: "(Courage) comes from out of nowhere and it overwhelms me." We agree with you. It's something you can't always predict or control, and it overcomes our fears. We're glad whoever was messing with your sister stopped after you confronted him. Has your courage ever deserted you?

My People

I don't know why people always have something bad about my people
 My people
 They always do each other dirty because they want something that they got
 My people
 My people always bringin' drugs into my community, but it's all we know
 My people
 There are a lot of shootings to each other from my people
 My people
 There are a lot of liquor stores in my 'hood but my people don't say nothing
 about it, but keep buyin'
 My people
 Need to start to stick up for themselves at all times possible
 This is for my people

-Kabb

From The Beat: One thing all people need is strong and decent leaders. Some of the greatest black leaders of all time have been murdered, and others have let drugs do themselves in. What about you, Mr. K? Can you be one of those leaders "Your People" need? They're waiting for you...

Courage Took Me Up On That Stage

Courage took me to go up dat stage and show what I've had in boxing skills by sparring wit' a boxer who has been boxing for two years. I was so nervous. I could imagine myself getting knocked out in front of over two hundred people, but I got over it and stood up to it, and went out in the ring and actually ended up hanging wit' him.

-Lil' Smoothie

From The Beat: It's strange what makes people nervous, isn't it? You weren't nervous about fighting the dude, but you were nervous about standing in front of so many people. But anyway, you did it. You overcame your fear (for that's what nervousness is) and went into that ring. Conquering our fears is always a challenge, so we're proud of you for meeting yours.

Hate Causes Drama

Everyone's experienced hate. But you know what I learned is when someone's hating on you, they're just singling out something about you that they don't understand or are jealous of. Think about whenever someone's hated on you or you hated on someone, and you'll see how pointless it is, and the kind of drama it causes, and that's real. It causes drama. What man likes drama?

-Young Kon

From The Beat: Well, drama can be very exciting sometimes, and some people thrive on that excitement. At the same time, we agree with you that hating causes no end of problems — and especially to the hater even more than the hated.

Doomed

The ceiling is white
 The walls are too
 All I keep thinkin' is
 "What am I gonna do?"
 Thanks to what I did
 My attorney says I'm due
 I miss the outs and wanna go back
 But 'til then, I'm gonna have to watch out
 For the people who stay strapped
 I want to get out and chill and go dumb
 But let loose of the homies
 Whose noses stay numb

-Pulou

From The Beat: We're sure you know what led you here/So we hope some changes are looming near/Cause if you go back to what you did before/You can be sure you'll face this... and more!

Thug Life

It's a day that I will never forget, when I found out that my cousin Tutu got killed. I felt something that I have never felt, like it was because of me or something. But I was nowhere near his house. He never messed with anybody. But he is watchin' over me all day long. Rest in peace, Tutu. I love ya, cousin.

When my ninja, Lil' D, got shot, it was him and me, but I had left to go home. As I approached my house, I heard three shots and I turned around and seen him hit da ground. It was really bad, because it was in front of his grandma's house, but that shhh won't stop me. He told me, "You would not live a good life if you scared to die," and he told me, don't let nothing get me down. I love ya, D. Rest in peace.

-Mr. Kabb

From The Beat: We wonder what Lil' D would tell you about being dead if he could come back and spend a few minutes with you in your room. We bet he'd trade places with you in a split second. Don't wait till it's too late to think for yourself. Tutu is dead. Lil' D is dead. But you are alive. Don't spit that gift away 'cause it's all we've got.

Hate

People hate because of jealousy. For instance, my lil' brother. There are many times like when I go out to leave the house to post it up with my cousins, and my lil' bra would always want to go, but knowing he's too young, he would always get mad and cry to my moms. Sometimes I would even have to just stay home and accept the fact I can't go, because of him. But in the end, I don't blame him, because I got love for him and if I was in his position, I would act the same way.

-Allen

From The Beat: We recognize this from our own relationship with our big brother. But we wouldn't call this hate because in the end, you two will have each other to love as long as you both are around. A little sibling jealousy is all part of the deal.

Dis Girl

Dis girl that I want
 Is playin' hard to get
 Dis girl that I want
 She knows how much we fit
 Dis girl that I want
 She be lookin' my way
 Dis girl that I want
 I call her, "Hey, bay-bay"
 Dis girl that I want
 I am not about to ask you again
 Dis girl that I want
 I hope that we can start over again

-Kabb

From The Beat: If it's girls you want, then you'd better find a way to stay free, because every time you hand your freedom over to the system, you'll find yourself surrounded by males, and writing sad love poems to "dat girl you want..."

Stranded In Redwood City

Stranded in my 'hood
 Kickin' back where I live
 In my city, with my homies
 Chillin' in that summer breeze
 With the smell of carne asada
 Cookin' on the grill with a Corona
 And some lemon, sippin' on dat bottle
 All flamed up, heading back to tha canton
 Waiting to kick it with the homies
 At Hoover Park

-Macias

From The Beat: We can feel the gentle breeze on this summer evening, and smell the carne asada on the grill. What a sweet memory without anger or violence. When you are able, again, to spend an evening kicking back, don't give all that away to the system!

A Man's Best Friend

People say that a man's best friend is his dog. To me, there ain't no friends! Period! Just fam. So, yeah, my dog is my best friend. I consider the homies fam, 'cause who goin' be more loyal to you than yo' family or yo' dog?

It's crazy how loyal dogs can be. My dog, Choppa, he waits for me every day by the fence at my house until I come home. That dog will turn on anybody in my fam for me and he's only seven months old. He ain't vicious or nothin', but that's my right-hand man!

-Juvy

From The Beat: Yes, dogs can be tremendously protective of their owners, even when they're not trained to be vicious. But can you go through life with only a dog as a friend? That sounds pretty lonely to us. Maybe there are no friends in an environment of war like on the streets. But if you were in a more peaceful place, do you think you could find real friends?

You

You are the one that tore my family apart
 And you are the one that broke my heart
 You interfere with my social life
 Because every time I turn around, I'm getting stabbed in the back with a knife
 Why can't you go? Why can't you leave?
 All I want is you to set my dad free
 It's like you put a spell on him that won't let him move
 But you took away his old mood and replaced it wit' new
 All I want is his old groove which never had you

-Pulou

From The Beat: We don't know who you are addressing, but whoever it is, it's clear you have no love for this person. What do you think your dad sees in her (or him?) that you don't?

Let The Teachers Teach

Teachers, one day you may give them a messed up day and go to your room and think about how you were messed up today. They just wanted to teach and I just had to make a speech about how boring they were today. You stop and think about how you were a punk-ass youngsta. They just wanted to teach.

So you think about it, and say to yourself, "Forget it, let them teach," and stop my punk-ass speeches and let it go. Go with the flow of the teacher so they can do what they do—teach!

-Young Neph

From The Beat: Sometimes, we all do things that seem stupid and childish when we look back. Don't beat yourself up over this. If you acted the fool, just learn not to do that the next time. Most of your teachers just want you to learn, and that is something that should be respected, even when you're not feeling it.

Why People Hate

People hate when they have something taken from them. People hate when they see someone succeed in things they failed. People's hate can be for a moment and others' can be endless. Hate can be strong or weak.

-On Hating

From The Beat: We wish you had remembered to put your name on this so we'd know who we are answering. But anyway, what about you? Who do you hate, and why? How does hate affect you?

Being Positive

I hear voices in my head, but it's so unclear
I see haters all around, but they seem to disappear
So I keep my head held high and wave those others good-bye
Because I'm on big and better things, like a moth to a fly
I'm tired of playin' around and wastin' time in my life
It's time for me to get mature, and get things right
'Cause I am a special person, very smart and bright
And I know I can do it, if I keep on doin' right
And everything will be perfect, and I will be a'right

-Babie

From The Beat: If you're waiting for everything to be perfect, you'll never be all right because perfection is only an idea, never a reality. But trying for perfection is a worthy goal, and we admire you for seeking it. If you're truly tired of "playin' around and wastin' time," then you'll stop, and things will truly get better.

My Brother Saved Our Neighbor's Life

I saw an act of courage when my brother saved our next-door neighbor. We were playing catch on the street. It was me, my brother, and our next-door neighbor. He was standing in the middle of the street, throwing the ball, when my brother saw a car coming towards our neighbor. So my brother started running full speed to try to grab him before the car hit him, and he barely made it.

-Edd

From The Beat: This is a great example of an act of courage. Did his courage inspire you? In what ways?

I Know I Can

I know I can do good if I put my mind into it
But I'm tired of talkin', I'm just gone prove it
With my actions
Step by step I'm a do it like a math fraction
People can doubt me, it don't really matter
Because I know I can do it, and dat's my factor
And my role for me to play ma part and achieve ma goal

-Babie

From The Beat: You're right, it doesn't matter what others think. You have the attitude that spells success, and that attitude is summed up by the words: "I know I can do it."

Why People Hate

Somebody hated on me because I got with this girl that he wanted. So he went out and told a different chick that I was talking to that me and the other girl was at my house. And he called me with the girl on the phone and asked me what was I doing with her. I told him and she was hot. He pulled a hater move, and me and him was never cool again.

A hater could get somebody hurt, because people don't deal with stuff the same way, and if someone likes someone else, the other person should just accept it.

-Anthony

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that this hater put you in a bad way with the girl you liked. Sometimes, people feel like if they can't have "her" then nobody can!

Hate Breeds More Hate

I think hate comes from people who have been hated on, so they hate back and that's how they thrive. Or they hate is a form of rejection, or they hate as a form of revenge. Say someone stole your CDs. Most people will go back and do something in spite of revenge. So they feel better, but they will still have that hate inside. That's what I think hate is.

-Weed

From The Beat: You've given us several reasons why people can hate, but you haven't brought it home to your own experience. What or who do you hate, and why?

So Many Unfallen Tears

Life is like a roller coaster
Times are good an' times are bad
I have so much anger inside
So many unfallen tears
Nobody seems to understand
I don't show no mercy
But as I sit here, I'm feeling like shhh
I been living life on da fast lane
So many nights I was ducking bullets
I hate being high and not being able to enjoy it
Paranoid, walking up an' down da Mission
I'm forced to live dis wicked life I choose
So long ago, I was forced to commit to this life
People hate all around, they don't know me at all
They in here, thinking they know da game
Talking crap about a homegirl, especially Giggles
Enough of dat—360 on dat subject
Point blank—life is like dat...

-Giggles

From The Beat: You know, Giggles, we've been reading your writing for a long time now, and we think you are standing between two competing ideas. One is that you are "forced" to live this life, and the other is you "chose" to live this life. Since we know so many people who've been much, much deeper into the life than you could possibly be (because they lived it for at least twice as many years), we also know that you are able to choose another way, as so many of them have. So if you hate the life you're in, then make some different choices and you'll find things will be different for you. If this is the life you choose, then expect to continue feeling like you do.

Courage

One of the times I stepped into courage was when I fought for one of my cousins. I guess he was scared, but I know we all feel like that at some points, when things go down.

-Allen

From The Beat: We think courage is acting to do the right thing even when you are scared. (By the way, we would rather have you write about just one topic instead of trying to write about all of them. If you chose just one, you can really write a lot more and explain yourself better.)

Stand-by Snitches

What I hate is people that snitch, when they have nothing to do with it. For example, if two people fight and get in trouble because one of the people watching snitched. I can understand if the person snitched if he got hurt by the situation, like one of his family got killed, or he was involved in the situation, but if he just snitched because he just saw or heard of something...

-Tongan

From The Beat: This is an interesting point of view. What you're saying is that you can understand people telling on others if they're directly affected, but not if they just witness something. But what if you witnessed a child being sexually molested? Would you "snitch" or just let it go?

True To The Game

I have to stay true to the game, because the game has showed me the way, good or bad. The life that I am living is for a real thug like me, but sometimes I think, "Was I was supposed to survive that shot to the head?" I know now that life is too short to take for granted. Me, I will always stay true to the game, no matter what happens. It's in my bloodline—the streets raised me, that's why I am who I am. Stay true to your game, like me.

-Kabb

From The Beat: Whether you were "supposed" to survive that shot to the head or not, you DID survive. Isn't there some meaning in that, some purpose? Must everything always remain the same simply because that's how it's always been? We wish you'd be true to yourself, and not to some "game" whose rules you had nothing to do with inventing, but only inheriting from someone else. You're smarter than that!

Pride V. Pride

Pride v. pride is like a cancerous disease
It spreads into our seeds

Filled with arrogance, ego and greed
Nullifying our abilities to achieve
Yet there's a pride in opposition
That would serve as ones mission
Providing purity of intentions
With visions of tranquility in mind
Self-esteem sublime
If in God we trust

An acknowledgement we must thrust
Into the forefront of life
If pride is to be understood
In its positive and negative mood

Understanding pride to be an attitude
Which originates from the caregivers responsibility to
educate

It evolves into your character
Orchestrating your thought
Initiating a behavior caught
Developmental prides effect

Causes man to arrogantly believe he's self-sufficient

As if God is not the reason for his existence
Pride v. pride entails you to study the reasons why
A convincing attitude like negative pride
Mandates such an intense drive

Imagining arrogance being the reason why
Our deeds of love and kindness do not thrive
Especially within the arrogant man
And his conceitedness to always grandstand
With shameful arrogance towards his fellow man
For no apparent reason

Other than, a sort of self-pleasure
Continuously appeasing perverted ideas of self

Pride v. pride tells a story
Of those infected with vain glory
Confounded within

Purportedly to be seen amongst men
Unwilling to accept
Your own lowly origin

Just a mere sperm drop emitted
Seeking vanity is your commitment
As if others should commend you

When in reality it is God who deserves ALL PRAISES DUE
While your self worth

Can only be attributed to God too

Which ultimately invalidates, the negative pride you brew

Pride v. pride egotism is basically a form of fanaticism
And its extremities only signifies the need

To abandon such a creed
And beware of what it breeds
Surely a behavior inconsistent
With what God has decreed

Pride v. pride has its relevancy to kin
And how our precious children are born innocent

Writing from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in
Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, we give you a veteran Beat writer
who we haven't heard from in quite some time. He sends us four
jaw-dropping poems, each of which deserves an attentive eye because
they're all well-worth reading. His first "Pride V. Pride" sounds like
he's speaking about the ills of certain pride through experience. For
although pride can be exactly what we need in some situations, it can
be devastating in others. His second, "Illusions," is our personal favorite
because he really speaks to the illusions many of our kids from poverty
stricken communities fall into. And that the only way to make it out
of such neighborhoods is in the entertainment business, i.e. singing,
sports, rapping, etc. The third poem, "Relationships," is about just that
— relationships. And then he concludes with "The Essence Of Man" a
poem about the true essence, which comes from within us. Great poems
from an even greater writer. Thank you...

Without a blemish on the heart or pigmentation of skin
Or any other characteristic in their life that depends

On assistance for development
For now the caregiver is entrusted
Who molds the thoughts and beliefs
Of what the child will eventually discover
A certain aspect of pride
Now uncovered

Pride v. pride from this point of view
Gives rise to that in which is true

That is God will always exist
Before and after you

Whether pride is construed as ambiguous or not
It's obligatory to visualize and implement prides positivity
Disregarding prides negativity

Remaining optimistic towards longevity
Pride v. pride of this magnitude, creates susceptibility of
all that is good

Within our human brotherhood
By first acknowledging God's good grace
In which we should humbly embrace
With the utmost sincerity

A heart can face
Purifying from the start
Our intentions from motives that are dark in purifying our
charitable deeds

From inconspicuous impurities
Paving the way

For that positive pride to breed
From within oneself
Taking into account

The thoughts and feelings of everyone else
Being thankful of God's true nature

For allowing you the privilege
Of extending yourself for the Greater
Betterment of others

Like the pride we have
In the respectability, honor and prestige
We hold in contentment for our mothers

Pride v. pride is a conscious effort to recover
From a pride, that may have been instilled by others
Not necessarily intentionally

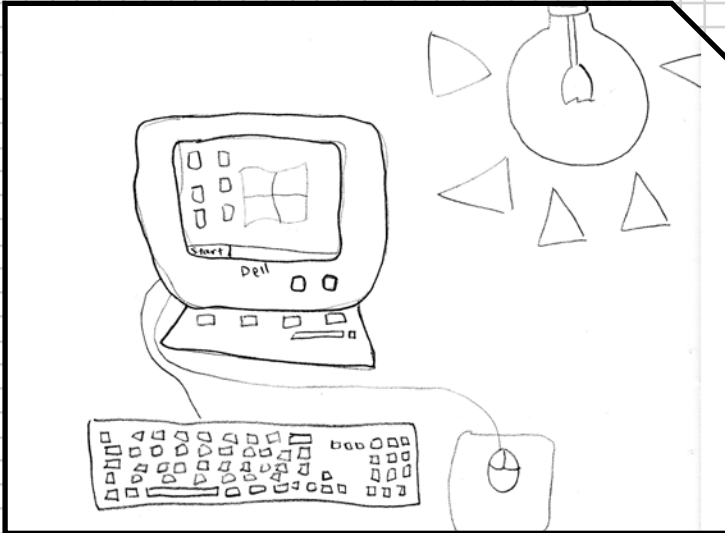
Unfortunately a negative pride will likely cause you to
suffer

Unless we regulate the pride in we've mustered

Developmental prides effect

Causes man to arrogantly believe he's self-sufficient

As if God is not the reason for his existence



Relationships

Some relationships are not always what they appear to be

You have those with conditions and those that are unconditionally

Particularly those relationships of nurturing
While other conditions revolve around being platonically or intimately shared

To a degree

Still some relationships are not always what they appear to be

Like the partner with no job or financial security
Dependant upon you — life's vehicle, for his necessities

A lack of interest in building collectively
Some relationships are not always what they appear to be

Mere lip professions of love

Rolling off of ones tongue and camouflage as a dove
Constantly reiterating — I love relationships so — called built to last

Regardless of the relationships present or past
Relationships undergoing hardships extremely fast
Like unpaid bills — addiction

And multiple men and women to be had

These sort of relationships

Easily defines our past

Speculating whether or not to engage in this task
Once again relationships drama developed behind a mask

These are the relationships not meant to grab hold of your life

Relationships of strife

Relationships we must desist

For all common relationships continue to persist

They are relationships amiss

Relationships which no longer exist

For these prior relationships have only been risk

Wherefore seeking marriage is the union

The ultimate twist

Relationships fulfilled

With obligations God tends for you not to miss

For God's laws you must not resist

For any sound relationships in ones midst

Is a relationship you must insist

That marriage is truly the relationship of ultimate bliss!

The Essence Of Man

The essence of man describes oneself

It's the core of who you are

Often times strangers from afar

With no face or ability to place

The essence of man in a specific space

For essence derives from within

The essence of man must depend

On his own willingness to contend

With ones higher self

In which he must defend

Against a lower self-susceptible to blend

While his higher self remains consistent with peace,
love and harmony as its trend

All the while ones lower self serves to offend

With traits like, pride, envy, jealousy and hate

Just to differentiate

Why ones lower self can only stagnate

While the true essence of man

Continues to strive to attain ones higher plan

By digging deep to recognize who you are

Not that stranger from afar

In an effort to reconnect

Your heart with its intellect

Therefore the essence of man

Must emerge with an ultimate plan

Against ones state of opposition

Preparing for a life mission

To become the essence of man

Illusions

Illusions of the past

Haunting memories of what we thought we should've had

Mansions, cars — that expensive bling-bling

Maybe a sporting or recording contract to sing

The stigma of all these illusions of life luxuries

Are surely attainable illusions of living life glamorously

Yet these same illusions failed me

For illusions are just that

Deceptions the eye cannot see

Until circumstances cause you to reflect

Upon reality and life as it should be

No more cause to neglect

What you feel and what you see

Not the illusions we chase

but the reality of life we must face

So let's stop chasing illusions

As if competing in the amazing race

This is not scripted reality T.V.

This is real life and illusions are only a trace

Of realities base and should not be followed

Instead erased from the minds of those unaware of their
own place

Because illusions can be evasive

Infringing upon your creative

Illusions incapable of freeing

The mind, body and soul, of a realistic human being

Illusions of the past co-existing with the present

Is this the life magicians? Or human technicians of the
intellectual kind

Educated and motivated beyond, these illusions of the
present

Therefore we must withstand and begin to engage in a life
amplified

For in conclusion

There's no optimism found in false illusions

I Want

The only thing I want,
 Is to be part of life,
 Not having to look over my shoulder,
 Or living in today's strife...
 Wanting the acceptance of society,
 With an honest man's name;
 Not dealing in drugs,
 With all the glory and street fame...
 I want to know how it feels,
 To hold a job and make my ends meet;
 Not cutting corners,
 And never feeling complete...
 I want to give back to my community,
 The one I took so much from;
 Not living like a failure,
 Turning to drugs to feel numb...
 I want to know how it feels,
 To sweat and have to sacrifice;
 Not living as a coward,
 Running from the responsibilities of life...
 I want to see the days,
 When my grandchildren run around;
 Not incarcerated by the laws,
 Or some other place hard to be found...
 I want to show the love of my life,
 The truest of all loves;
 Not seeing hurt in her eyes,
 Because I couldn't rise above...
 I want to be challenged,
 And successfully pass the test;
 Not having to cheat and steal,
 Just to be among the rest,
 Things are simple,
 Not wanting to flaunt;
 Having a proud life,
 Is the only thing I want!

Is it not self-explanatory? My life has been what I've not wanted failure and shame. I just want to see, feel and love life. I'm not demanding nothing from no one just setting self goals which I got the potential.



This next first time writer is a great one, we can already tell. He's twenty-three years old and is writing from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. We haven't witnessed someone so empathetic and compassionate in a long time. One who recognizes the mistakes he's made without losing sight of where he wants to be. We can respect a man who not only takes responsibility for his actions, but will also do whatever it takes to better himself in a dark situation. He's a profound poet, writing about everything from "Words" to "My Life's Insight," and we know you'll enjoy as much as we have if not more. Please keep corresponding with us for we see something in you that's rare.

*Money is great,
 Fame is even better;
 But nothing can compare,
 To a friendship that last forever...*

Words

Words are profound,
 And should be taken to the extreme;
 Because without a purpose,
 life has no meaning...
 I have been told,
 Not to take things so serious;
 But to make me past of this corrupt society,
 I know their concepts delirious...
 Words are often spoken
 With a distorted use in life;
 That's why they're here today,
 But vanish like the nights...
 Words are not so often lived,
 But just symbols that are spoken;
 That's why life's so corrupt,
 Because the comfort in homes are broken...
 If you want to define life,
 It's not about a royalty;
 It's these words to the extreme
 Called respect, honor and loyalty...
 Money is great,
 Fame is even better;
 But nothing can compare,
 To a friendship that last forever...
 People use the word love as comfort,
 They use words of hate;
 But when do they realize,
 Its words the future will dictate...
 I believe everyone in this world,
 Has some type of flaw;
 But to come across someone uncut,
 Is seldom amongst this population at all...
 But when you do,
 They take words to the extreme,
 They're not living in a fantasy world,
 But they're still holding onto dreams...
 You can divide up this world,
 Which in my philosophy is a proverb;
 The only true value in life,
 Is when a man has his word
 I think the world could be better off,
 With the actuality and realizations of their terms;
 Meaning what they say,
 Knowing the definition of their words...

Just wanting people to know what they say has effect on life. I love life, and everything about it.

Amanda

Amanda, you were sent,
 From the heavens above,
 Your hearts so soft,
 Like feathers of a dove...
 Your body's like a diamond,
 Which only I can find,
 I was so glad to know you,
 So glad you were mine...
 Because everything about you,
 Puts a tingle down my spine;
 And your spontaneous sex,
 Was one of a kind...
 I miss your smooth skin,
 And your playful grin;
 It only took one kiss,
 Forever I'm locked in...
 I pray the day,
 I can hold you again,
 My love is serious,
 There's too much at stake to pretend...
 You're the perfect angel,
 That fly's through my mind;
 I dream the day,
 You say your mine...
 Then I will have a complete love,
 For you nothing I will lack;
 I'll be gentle as a teddy bear,
 And you'll be my pussy cat...
 No matter where we go,
 In my heart you'll always find;
 The truest of all loves,
 Where it's been all this time...

This is for the love of my life. That at the time I was too young and irresponsible to realize what I had. I will love her till my dying day. What we shared is all I could ask for in this life... Amanda!

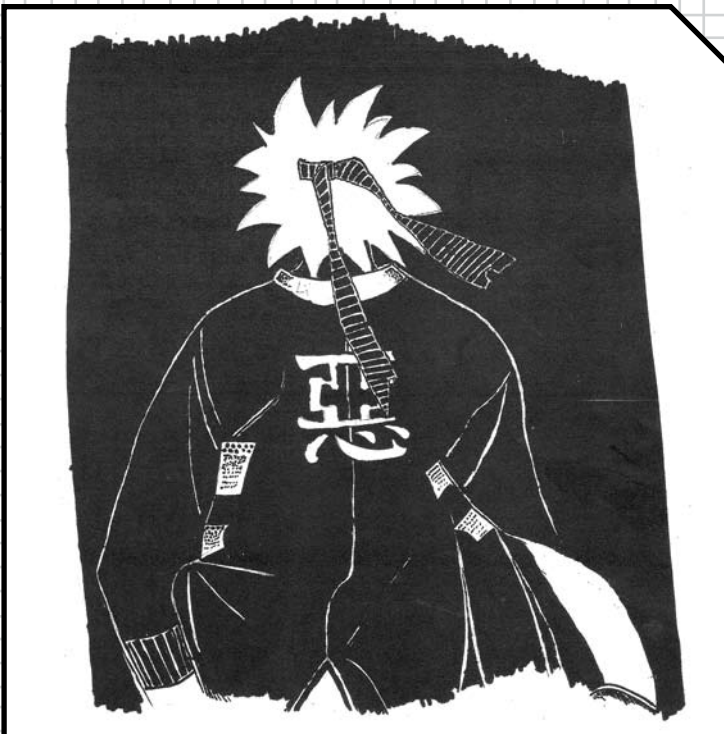
Love Freely

It's been said:
 Once you go black;
 You'll never go back...
 Or:
 If it's not white;
 Then it's not right...
 But to define love,
 Its not by ethics or race;
 Although it's sought passionately,
 Its found in the most common place...
 Open up your mind,
 See life for what its worth;
 Exploring every detail,
 Like traveling this earth...
 The dawn of a new discovery,
 Its what life's all about;
 We're all only human,
 And love always begins with doubt...
 It's a natural desire,
 To always want more,
 Curiosity gets the best of us,
 Because life was meant to be explored...
 Ever notice how exotic things,
 Seem extraordinary and attractive;
 Loves no different,
 Because we're naturally born passive...
 So stop believing in that,
 Misleading influential superstition;
 Open your heart and love freely,
 Because your never wrong listening to your intuition...

A lot of people are influenced my point is to love freely and see what's out there

My Life's Insight

Nothings promised,
 And nothings guaranteed;
 I lost it all,
 Because I couldn't see...
 I had it all,
 And did my best;
 I gave the world,
 It just wasn't enough...
 I try to go on,
 And I'm stuck in my past;
 I'm moving forward,
 But still coming in last...
 I hate myself,
 For just being me;
 I gave up on life,
 And now I'm paying my fee...
 With a scattered life,
 And a broken heart;
 At the end,
 Still looking for the start...
 I've had my times;
 My souls in torment,
 Is what my conscious chimes...
 It wasn't worth,
 The money and street fame;
 Looking into my loved ones eyes,
 Seeing and feeling nothing but shame...
 Knowing nothings promised,
 And nothings guaranteed;
 I will fight for myself,
 As well as my family...



Thought Process

I was sitting up tonight thinking and I decided to write how I was feeling

Frankly, I haven't figured this one out. But it is not as if I am not trying. Pinpointing what a man — no a black man — is within the context of America is about as easy as specifying the day on which Jesus will walk the earth anew.

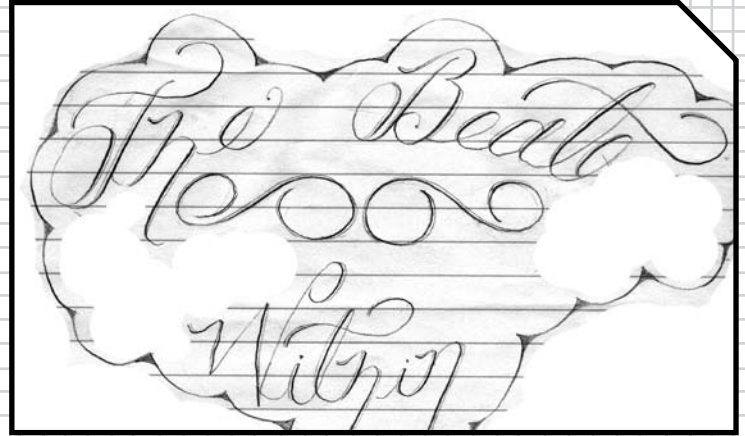
Perhaps the deeper question is not "what is a man?" but instead, "what kind of shall one be?" It's not like we black men were given a blueprint at birth: here is how you survive in America. Instead, our lives are one probation after another. The uncontrollably reactionary among us (me) wind up in prison, or dead, by our twenties. The broken ones become street combers, mental institution patients or addicted to drink or drugs. Then there are those of us who think we've made it, and have the tangible American trappings to show for it. Yet prowling beneath the surface of our trippie illusion is a thinly veiled frustration and rage. Maybe, just maybe, the definition of manhood we've inhaled is not actually the one we need to breathe. Fact is, we live in a male dominated nation, but few black men ever get to dominate anything other than their women or each other, so we substitute for manhood with ours, clothes, sex drives, drugs and alcohol, job titles and petty status and any political belief or religious dogma that justifies and sanctions our materialism, our self hatred, our sexism, our violent outbursts and our slow suicides.

My female friend said she wondered why so many black men can never stay in one place too long. "Y'all always running," she maintained. I replied: Quite possibly it is because so few of us have ever had any consistency in our lives. Across the Atlantic. Through the slave actions. To the fields. Past a barbed wire fear called night, away from dogs, into nooses, up north, from Mississippi to Cali and from the Caribbean to America we ran. Like O.J. ran. Like Mike Tyson running, into trouble. Like Tupac ran toward death. Then my female friend said "But does that mean I can count on you running also? Away from a potential relationship? Away from the possibility of love? From marriage? From a family? From all that you, a black man, say you stand for?"

The honest answer is I don't know. But, again, I am trying. What I do know is that many of my homeboys want to be men, minus rules dictated by race and circumstance. It just isn't enough to have precarious spaces where we can flex — a basketball court, a stage, a street corner. Real power is creating our own spaces — spiritually, emotionally, physically — where we can manifest a new kind of manhood, on our own timetable and on our own terms.

It's like making promises and continually breaking them. No one will ever consider your promise after that, and will label you as a dishonest fool.

This next writer always has a whole lot to say and we appreciate him for that. He's writing from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida. He's extremely informative as some of his pieces are strictly step by step processes for us to use in order to pursue a better life. He talks about the myths that young women may fall victim to and then lists the harsh realities. He also talks about what's going on deep in his thought process and talks a whole lot about love. The meaning of love to him has diminished from when it was first created. People throw those words around a lot nowadays and even though it's just as bad as promising something you can't come through with, people still are guilty of it more and more. He writes a letter to his mother who we're sorry to say has passed away. Our hearts go out to him because we know the passing of a loved one can be a very difficult thing to deal with when we're incarcerated. And for those who have kids, he's also written a baby-daddy handbook. One of our most versatile writers lately, so please don't be hesitant and keep reading.



Them Three Words And Commitment

"I love you" are three words that most black men don't say or hear enough throughout their lives. We don't say it because we're unsure of exactly what it entails. For most of the time, the question of just what is love has perturbed the most scholarly of men. The supreme definition of love laid down by the original black men (Gods) have been lost. Whatever it may mean, "love" is the strongest word in the human language.

The most fearsome attribute of this word is the indoubious commitment that goes along with its very utterance. Somehow, every black man knows that once he tells his Queen or seed that he loves them, its no turning back, he must be responsible and committed to them forever. "I love you" is an extremely valuable phrase, yet when "players" use it in an effort to "win" what their selfish nature (dick) wants, it loses its worth. It's like making promises and continually breaking them. No one will ever consider your promise after that, and will label you as a dishonest fool.

Black men don't hear "I love you" nearly enough, causing them to lose their self-pride and love. This prevents them from ever loving others; a deadly cycle in which hate is the ultimate result. To hear these is heaven manifested through sound for the black man its no other feeling like it. To know that someone cares about your concerns, thoughts, choices, and desires, that's heaven. But with this feeling comes a heavy price- vulnerability. Many black men have been so emotionally insecure all their life that the reality of giving love or being loved appears out of reach. We have become men without souls, without spirituality. In essence, we have lost our ability to be god-like because we have lost our ability to love. God is love. God is commitment. The two are of utmost need within the black community, and we are the only ones who can make it so.

Baby-Daddy Handbook

(99 problems but a baby-mama ain't one)

Reasons to keep sleeping with your baby-mama

There's a lot of disease going around. Who wants to deal with all that? Just stick with the one you got.

You got a much better chance of staying out of court. The main reason why brethren end up in court is because they're not holding it down.

You're going to have to deal with her for at least 18 years. Might as well stick it out with her.

Less headaches! Your baby-mama will not wild out if you make sure she's straight and she's comfortable.

It's better for the kids.

Reasons to not keep sleeping with your baby-mama

If you're still messing with her just for convenience, you ain't letting her move on. And that's what you want.

It a struggle just to do the best you can for your child. You can't concentrate on keeping the mother happy too. If your child is cool — the mother should have no complaints.

At some point, your kid is going to wonder why you're not with his mother. Don't make it complicated by being in and out.

Communication is key for a successful relationship. If you still messing with her and you ain't really feeling her like that, there will be problems.

Letting your baby-mama think it's all good will backfire eventually. What happens when you get a new girlfriend.

Wisdom

She provides me warmth and comfort in this cold and unforgiving world. She's like a mother; like a sister. She's my flame; my soul. I can't deny her love for me because she refuses to leave me by myself. She even cries for me when she sees me struggling to survive.

Dear Wisdom,
 Deep within every man I know you exist. I know because I've found you myself. I was once told by knowledge, my father and brother, that whenever I became cold that I should seek your protection. I want to write this to you. I found you. Since I have knowledge to assist me in my journey and you to comfort me. A journey toward understanding. I know it will not be easy because I remember what you've whispered to me once before.

You said, "Shawn, you're black. You will never receive anything in life for free. Everything that you will want to achieve you'll have to fight for it. And once you get it you'll have to fight to keep it." remember that? And with that you simply smiled. Again, you said to fight, that you loved me and that I would never be alone.

Starting Early

When I was in my mid-twenties, my female friend gave me a book for my birthday. The book had nothing in it, the pages were blank. In the note that accompanied this gift, my female friend offered some wonderful advice. The gift of her message was this: "Shawn, settle who you are and what you believe in, and then fill these pages up." In other words, she was encouraging me to develop my philosophy of life early and to put it on paper so I would never forget it.

What was really important to me? What was I willing to die for? What was non-negotiable and what was optional in my relationships? The sooner I settled all this, the better off I would be.

As my female friend understood, there is tremendous value in starting early when it comes to determining your overall vision and attitude about life, as well as in many other areas. When you're young, it's hard to imagine how critical this is — you think you have your whole life ahead of you to figure everything out. Maybe so, but all things being equal a person who gets out of the block quickly has infinitely more potential for success than someone who doesn't.

When I was 30, I put together a list of 4 powerful, practical things every young leader should do early in life by the time he or she turns 30, at the latest. We've already discussed one of them: Develop your philosophy of life.

1. Know Yourself

This isn't some philosophical mystery; It's actually quite simple. Knowing yourself means being acutely aware of your strengths and weaknesses. It means knowing what you do well and what you don't do so well. That way you can work in your strength zone, where your most significant opportunity for growth and success lies, as opposed to focusing on your weak zone, where all you'll find is frustration and stagnation.

2. Settle Your Family Life

Identify the issues that are affecting your family and figure out how to deal with them. Relationship always takes work, but it's pretty sad when two 30-year-olds are still struggling with the same problems they had when they met years ago. You may not resolve every issue entirely; you and your spouse may have to agree to disagree on some items. The key is to be comfortable with your differences so you can move forward together.

3. Determine your priorities

By the time you hit 30, you should have your priorities set. You should know how you want to spend your time and to what you want to devote your life. The following statement, which I've carried in my mind for years, highlights the importance of this: "He who seeks one thing, may hope to achieve it before life is done. But he who seeks all things wherever he goes, must reap around him in whatever he sows a harvest of barren regret."

4.

Early in life, people give up their health to gain wealth; later in their life, they give up their wealth to regain their health. That's how it often works, but it doesn't have to be that way. I'm not saying you have to be able to run a marathon. Just exercise and get yourself in decent shape. Don't put it off until later: start today. Trust me whatever sacrifice this requires will pay dividends later. You won't get these issues resolved overnight they take time, thought, and in some cases, a great deal of sweat. But don't let the complexity of the task discourage you from starting the process. Remember, the sooner you settle all this, the better off you will be.

Like The Season

Compassion comes in waves of emotions such as the seasons do, year around! One cannot but anticipate the next disaster to hit. We can only unite and organize whether through individual concern or by unifying the community.

Compassion brings strength, courage, love and understanding compassion is not weak. It is the strength that arises out of seeing the true nature of suffering in the world. Compassion allows us to bear witness to that suffering, whether it is in ourselves or others, without fear; it allows us to name injustice without hesitation, and to act strongly, with all the skill at our disposal. To develop this mind state of compassion is to learn to live, with sympathy for all living beings, without exception. Compassion evolves out of tragedy and disaster, but in the end results, unity will bring love and understanding to those that read it. peace

My Cell

There's a corner in my cell where I talk to God each day. When everyone has left the unit, I think and plan and pray.

I close the window to keep the quiet in: I ask for strength and guidance Ere the tasks of day begin.

I banish every unkind thought, all weakness, lack, and pain; Let love divine pour into me till I am new again.

No matter what my duty, be it strange or new or grim, I am able to perform it if I put my trust in him.

His promises are meant for me; I claim them for my own; I try to merge my will with his and see his way alone.

He proves his love so often when every way seems barred; the door swings wide, his smile spears: my father, and my lord.

I know that I am growing in strength, in faith, and grace; this corner in my cell has become a church place.

My Purpose

To be a little kindlier

With the passing of each day;

To leave but happy memories

As I go along my way;

To use possessions that are mine

In service full and free;

To sacrifice the trivial things

For larger good to be;

To give of love in lavish ways

That friendship true may live;

To be less quick to criticize,

More ready to forgive;

To use such talents as I have

That happiness may grow;

To take the bitter with the sweet,

Assured 'tis better so;

To be quite free from self-intent

Whatever the task I do;

To help the world's faith stronger grow,

In all that's good and true;

To keep my faith in God and right

No matter how things run:

To work and play and pray and trust

Until the journey's done. God grant to

Me the strength of heart, of motive and of will,

To do my part and his purpose to fulfill

The Facts And Fables, Myths And Realities Of Love

I feel that today is a good time to assess the state of love, to take a look at the facts and fables, the myths and realities of this uncontrollable emotion that creates so much commotion and confusion, and sometimes joy and happiness.

Myth: Love will tame and change a man, especially if the sex is good.

Reality: Love will not change a man, regardless of how good the sex might be. Many women have failed to accept this reality. Far too often great sex is mistaken for love. The truth comes out when the passion subsides and the rituals of daily life reveal that the couple has little in common. Women sometimes fall in love with men who is unscrupulous, lazy, a philanderer, an underachiever, a poor father, etc., and she assumes that her love (or sex) will transform him into an honest, faithful, successful man and great father. Be real! Those character flaws often are too deeply ingrained to buff out.

Myth: If you can only get a man, everything will be right in your life and you will be happy.

Reality: A man is not your key to eternal happiness. Women who feel that their dreary lives will be transformed if they just can get a man to love them are often disappointed. You are the key to your own happiness. If you are fortunate enough to have a good man, then enjoy happiness with him. Live your life with your man, not through your man or for your man. Live your life for yourself.

Myth: There aren't enough good men to go around, so dating a married man (or any man) is better than no man at all.

Reality: Dating a married or otherwise committed man is never the solution. More times than not, the outcome is disastrous for the woman, though it might be great for the man. take your time and choose wisely. Choose the wrong man and you will soon long for your peaceful "man-less" days and nights.

Myth: If you get pregnant, he will fall in love and marry you.

Reality: Not necessarily. Women have been playing that game for as long as men and women have been mating. In some rare cases, that might happen, but history has shown that plan doesn't really work.

Myth: The sooner I have sex with him the sooner he will fall in love with me

Reality: if you have sex with him before he gets to know and respect you as a person, he will enjoy your body and move on to a real challenge, whom he considers to be a real woman.

*Live your life with your
 man, not through your
 man or for your man. Live
 your life for yourself.*

Thought

Thought is the supreme power within man and conscious thought is the power worker of miracles and the giver of every fine gift in your life. However, if the thought is occupied only with sensual and selfish desires, it then loses all power to attract the celestial elements from the Azilutic world of existence. You should continually direct your thoughts inward because within your own mind are the unseen forces which create everything in your environment. All doors are magically opened or tragically shut in the face of your thoughts. Whether you rejoice at the achievement of your heart felt desire in life or look to the past in sorrow at unfulfilled dreams is a result of your thinking. In the expression of your thoughts, you should learn how to handle language just as expertly as a sculptor shapes his clay or an artist spreads his color upon the canvas, because your words carry within them your destiny.

Just as precise language has the ability to move people in purposeful directions, sloppy language can misdirect people. You must begin to use language that creates a sufficiently powerful rather than an unproductive and weak state for you. Precise language is decisive, careful, exact, well defined, truthful and leads one to results that are productive. In contrast, inaccurate, sloppy language is hasty, careless, incautious, loose, and results in effects that are enervating and non-productive. Some distortions in language can keep you from accomplishing goals in life and you should look for examples of these forms of expression in yourself and in others. An expression such as I can't, is neither true nor productive and you must not look for reasons why you can't but ask questions that will lead you back to power, such as "what would happen if I could," Thoughts such as these give you a list of possibilities and actions that you may not have seen before. When you claim depression for yourself — oh, I feel so depressed, and ask yourself why you find yourself in this state, a long list of reasons will invade your thinking. But if you ask, how am I depressed? (exact, precise language), you begin to realize that there are certain things you do to create that state.

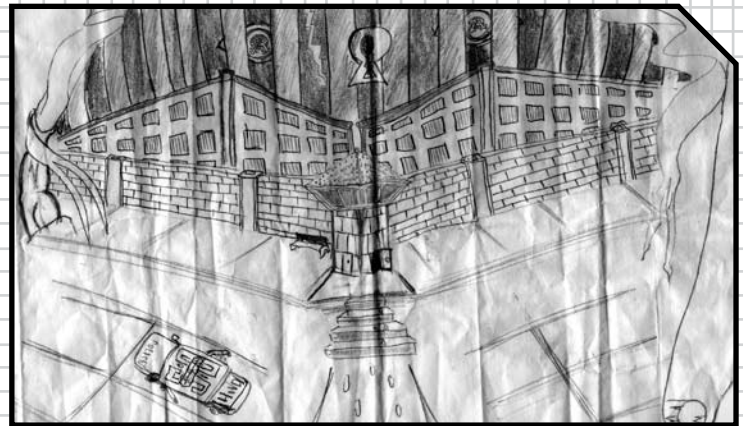
What do you picture in your mind? Do you picture the worst possible scene? What do you say to yourself? Do you speak in slow, low and sad tones— I'm so depressed today. I feel terrible. I can't seem to do anything right, and then sigh a long, pitiful sigh. How do you sit? Walk? Breathe? Depression doesn't just happen, you have to work at it! Once you become aware of how you put yourself in certain emotional states you can begin to create the opposite effect. The lesson to be learned in these examples is that no matter how dismal a situation may appear to you, you can question and examine your language and your actions so that it leads you away from the problem into the area of a powerful solution. You must have the courage to examine yourself.

In the expression of your thoughts, you should learn how to handle language just as expertly as a sculptor shapes his clay or an artist spreads his color upon the canvas, because your words carry within them your destiny.

Laughter, The Best Medicine

A team of archeologists is excavating in Israel when they find a cave with the symbols of a woman, a donkey, a shovel, a fish, and a star of David on the wall. The head archeologist points to the first drawing. "This indicates that these people were family oriented and held women in high esteem" he says. "The donkey shows they were smart enough to use animals to till the soil. The shovel means they were able to forgo tools. Even further proof of high intelligence is the fish: if famine hit the earth, they would take to the sea for food, the last symbol is the star of David, telling us they were Hebrews."

The second archeologist shakes his head. "Hebrew is read from right to left," he explains. It says, "Holy Mackerel, dig the ass on that chick!"



Letter After Time

To My Mother

Here's something I never told you
 I jumped into a drug gang when I was 12 and started smoking weed as well. I regret everything I ever did wrong (especially the things I just listed) and I wish I could take it all back

Here's what's old and new

Your best friend died about eight months after you. My home girl K committed suicide. I did five crimes, got charged with two, and got 10 years. I'm locked up for at least 2 years more. I miss the hell out of you and think of you everyday.

Just last night

I was thinking about everyone who's died in my life. I think about what it would be like if you were still alive. I know I wouldn't be here, and I probably would never have smoke weed.

It amazes me

To look ahead to the future, to think about who else is gonna die (including myself) and how I'm gonna be able to handle it. I also wonder if I'll ever be as happy (again) as I was when you were alive.

The Beat Within readers, there are many of us brimming with hope and anticipation for the future, yet there are too many more who have given up. It may take daily positive thinking to convince ourselves that we, individually, are special, gifted, deserving people. We can personally inspire others by exercising our demon — our cynicism, our destructive habits — and by acknowledging the value inside our hearts and heads, and putting it to use.

When "Bebe's Kids" Attack

We are all guilty. We saw it coming years ago and we did nothing to stop it. Then again what could we do? It's not like we could have raised them. They weren't even our children. As much as we would have liked to step in, we couldn't. It just wasn't our business. Besides, how do you tell a woman how to raise her child? Nobody wants to get caught up in a verbal altercation with a young lady who feels insulted because somebody tried to tell her how to be a mother. So what did we do? We just sat back and watched. Sometimes we laughed. Other times we left out of frustration. Most of the time, we just shook our heads and felt sorry for the little one. We could have stood up to her. We could have told her that swearing at and punching three-year-olds was not a good idea. We could have at least informed her about the hazards that come with allowing children to consume baby sips of alcohol and the effect marijuana smoke has on their mental development, but we didn't. I know we wanted to say something, but we just didn't know her that well. She didn't run in our circles. She wasn't one of our friends. She was just some "chick" that lived down the street, the cousin of a friend or the girl who had all of those kids with no father to speak of. I mean, we all remember her. Some of us just don't want to be reminded. We never thought that our complacency would come back to haunt us. For all we knew, she was just "Bebe" in the flesh. The embodiment of a comedic character we thought we'd never see. We never

imagined that the kids, the ones we knew she was unfit to raise, would grow up to be our biggest nightmare.

Fifteen years have passed since then and we have the nerve to wonder, "What's going on." We must have thought that those children left in her care would overcome their environment, that somehow they would learn the value of right from wrong on their own. That marijuana smoke, it must have affected our brains, too.

Now we are paying the price. Her children are preying on our children. The little three-year-old who told us to kiss his behind way back when, now he's shooting up high schools, robbing blind people and murdering teenagers in their front yard. We always knew he'd go for bad. We just didn't realize it would be to this extent.

Today, Bebe is also afraid of him. The seed she poisoned from birth no longer respects her. She holds her head down as she apologized to victims' families. The shame she feels comes from the knowledge that she's partially responsible for every crime her son committed.

For us, the guilt is a little more indirect, but we still share some of the blame. They say it takes a village to raise a child. Saying that we dropped the ball in that department would be an understatement. Just like Bebe, our lack of action taken years ago helped to create the heartless soul that killed my friend Antron-Feel Good-Barfield. For that, should all be sorry.

RIP "Feel Good"

Beat

Lately I've been trippin', stressing,
 Feels like I've been getting no blessings
 Out of whack, out of sync,
 Takin' time outs just to think
 Dealin' with too many people
 In a situation which breeds evil.
 Hate rising,

I need to find a counteraction to comply with
 Numb my body over just to keep my composure.
 Is this the way we were taught to deal with life?
 Blood is colder than ice, my life, is it a sacrifice?
 God, take this heart of stone and turn it to flesh,
 I want to cry when I put my head to rest.
 Can't let my eyes swell up homie because that's
 weakness.

Too bad it's myself who thinks this.
 Deal with life my own way, Is it possible not to sway
 Left, because that's wrong from right,
 God lead me to your heavenly paradise.
 Was my development arrested when drugs were first
 tested?

If so I'm a pre teen, but I don't believe in this G.
 I'm a grown man, but trust me, I don't live off the fat of
 the land.

Learned to be this way in a cage,
 This is where I've spent the better part of my adult days.
 Sad but true, 19 years young put in county blues.
 Is it possible this can happen to you?

I'm a maintain this life,
 Because through the struggles and idiotic troubles,
 Success is in sight and that's worth the fight! Right?
 To my people in the struggle, keep yo' head up.
 To my people holdin' it down, never let up
 One love,

T-WREX

Nothing can compare to the harsh reality of being locked up like we're anything less than human. We sweep our 'societal problems' under the rug without paying attention to what's going on under there. And while we nonchalantly go on with our lives outside of the rug, we fail to realize that just because there are people living under the rug, doesn't mean they're not like the rest of us. We hurt, they hurt. We love, they love. Everyone with a heartbeat has something to offer. This next poem was written and sent to us from Fairfield, CA, where the writer seems to be going through it right now. We like to believe that nothing is permanent, especially our emotions, that things change like the seasons, so hopefully he'll be able to get out of the rut he's in. However, we think he's perfectly justified in being in a rut where he is. Well, he could tell you better than us, so we'll shut up for now...



I Have Been There

I have been there. I have been drug.
 I have struggled up much tears sweat and blood.
 I have fought my way through years of the thickest kinds
 of mud.

I was told at a very young age
 That I was not going to make it to see 18 years old.
 Now I have lived out 18 years old two times.
 Thanks to God. Cause on my own.
 I would have never made it this far in life.
 I have been there, and stood up through some of the
 meanest,
 Baddest, and toughest test of times.
 And I will not lie,
 'Cause many times I have came close to losing my mind.
 Cause I was at war with myself.
 And peace for me was so hard to find.
 And while being locked down in this cell, I have been
 through the mill, but what kept me going. God blessed
 me with a strong will.
 At times it seems as if my walls was closing in on me so
 fast.
 And they would not be still, I have been there,
 With the war that started within my mind.

*I write about my struggles. And
 the real things I see in this life.*

Do I Care For Me

Do I care for me?
 Why do I sometimes act as if I don't care about me.
 Cause action speaks louder then words.
 Cause many times out if my mouth I say.
 I say "I care about myself."
 But my action did not show that I did care for me.
 Cause if I did care. I would have taken the time out to
 think about,
 How much pain I brought to my mother,
 And about all the tears I brought from her eyes,
 When I got myself into some kind of trouble.
 Placing me into a uncaring situation away from my
 mother, brother, and sister who I loved so much.
 And this was something I had never taken into
 consideration.
 I was to young to really understand what real care was
 all about.
 It was not like it was in my heart to be caring about
 myself and others. I just did not know any better at that
 time.
 And when I was always locked away from my family,
 Is when I most felt the need to start caring for me.
 So I could feel how much others cared for me.
 And if I wanted others to care for me I had to start caring
 for myself. Cause everything starts with self.
 Seem like every time I got mad, the first words came out
 of my mouth I don't care.
 And my action had coincide with that only when I was
 mad.
 And as time went on I got older and wiser,
 Which mean I was learning how to care for myself.
 More then words could say so.

We haven't heard from this next writer in a minute and there was a time when there wasn't a Beat Within that didn't have his name in it. This week he talks about where he's been to offer a shoulder to those who are going through the same. As if to say don't trip, I have been there. Then he talks about where writing has gotten him and how blessed he is to have such a skill as being able to convey his beliefs and emotions to us through paper and pen. He then closes by posing the question, "Do I Care About Me?" which we feel is a great question to ask. In fact, many of us should be asking this of ourselves. He's writing from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. Thank you Michael and we hope there's not too much time in between the next time we hear from you again.

Writing Is A Skill

Writing is a skill. And one of my biggest test.
 In me my writing has brought out the best.
 I write more to better my skill.
 And through my writing I am able to express how I really
 feel.
 I want to be a writer throughout the rest of my years I
 have to live. Cause writing is good and writing in a right
 way.
 Helps for me not to be misunderstood.
 Cause I write about my struggles. And the real things I
 see in this life. Which sometimes makes me think twice.
 And I know that there are not many people who care
 about the way I feels.
 But I write from my heart. So I got to tell it like it is.
 That's why God bless me with this writing skill.
 And I love the way writing makes me feel.
 And at times my writing has brought from my eyes years
 of tears. From all the pain I feel. But I am very thankful
 for this writing skill.
 And each day I wake up I seek to build my writing skill.
 And strive to show others that writing is for real.
 And when I write about things like me feeling, anger
 emotion.
 All the pain I feel, from being at war with myself
 And the world around me
 So for many years helps me reflect over the years of me
 growing up.
 It also helps me to reflect back to some of the best times
 in my life. Which was only short time.
 When I was growing up with my family,
 But writing helps me to stay in touch with my real self.
 Writing helps me to stay in touch with my writing skills.
 Writing helps me to stay in touch with my goals and
 plans.
 And my writing has brought me a long ways.
 My writing has helped me to see better days.
 My writing has helped me to deal with rage.



School Fool

Sniffing paint and glue
P.C.P and purple hair cess too
This Young "G" wasn't no teacher's pet
So I had no waxed red apples for Mrs. Janette
But, I would say "God Bless thee "J"

Slumped back in my chair
chewing on a pencil muttering to
Myself "just let her
Do her thing"
Earrings glittering

Writing on the chalkboard man, I hope Miss "J" ain't
expecting
To call me up to solve anything cause I
Wasn't even listening
She pissed me off sometimes, But I was woman respecting
Jocks and squares were the homeboys flunky's
Stepping aside when we strolled the hall, cafeteria,
Gym or class entering
What? You want some, Get some, you man enough then
step in the men's room stall
Fist-to-fist
You think you're quick, gonna run into quicker, and then
there's the quickest
I needed a punching bag this day
Cops escorting me off the premises for breaking a nose
but hey
I had my chances, suspended? Not this day
Off to juvy
Against the rule , No longer groovy
"God watching me"
upset in my cell
Saying "sorry" wont help, principle probably glad
I blame myself, C.D.C and Rehab my life would grab...
Only two years after the "My bad"
I sure did miss my sis telling me "Get up lazy but you
gotta
Go to school now" with a
Shake of her head and pillow thrown on my face "Now AL"
"please"

School is of utmost importance because education is the road to understanding and understanding equips us to make efficient choices. This next piece, "School Fool," is a tale we're sure many can relate to and that's basically not taking school as serious as we probably should. For most, school is the highlight of the day, you know being able to soak up as much information as possible and then being able to regurgitate that information when necessary. But for some school is something less than that. A place to congregate with your homeboys, a place where you're more focused on relationships than education. Well, for Alex it was a place where he got into trouble and now he wishes he could be back in that place where his sister would wake him up and take him to school. So now he's schooling us readers by letting us know the true value of education. A mature way of expressing that from an even more mature writer, who writes us from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA.

Jumped out of bed, showered and dabbed on cologne,
dressed and done smoked A bit of hash-dooie stomach
growling, eyes heavy lidded
Taste duds skidded- Frankenberry, Capn' Crunch or Trix-
all the bomb- and always a honey bun
Sis warming up the car. This school fool was going to have
some fun
She said: "look I'm not writing anymore fake sick notes,
so
You can play hooky, Im tired of it" "luv ya
but you should just stop," she said as she cried,
in her I would confide
went on being a fool, behind my 64' shades, bald heads
and or fades
flipped- up hat, black one- lettered belts, creased- down
Ben Davis
"Bens" vest, pendletons and khakis that would fit a fat
man
Jolly
100% polly
crispiest white shirt,
Tip-shined Stacy Adams, and assorted hush puppies and
don't step on these new white Chuck Taylor's I'll snap
You on your back
Black and brown J - flaps and my girl wearing her
crisscrossed, black band
Meaning "hands off" spoken for,
My baby-grand
Life prolongation
You need your education, G.E.D. Don't be empty

EDGAR PATINO

This very short poem was sent to us by an old friend who use to write with us in the Santa Cruz Juvenile Justice Center, who is now incarcerated in the Rites Of Passage in Yerington, Nevada. He writes about all the things he can't imagine losing and then he continues to write about the things he's lost despite his imagination. We really liked this short poem, but sort of wish he could've wrote a little more. Short, but very powerful...

I Couldn't Imagine

I couldn't imagine a day without breathing,
I couldn't imagine a day without seeing,
I couldn't imagine a day without love,
So why do I continue to live this crazy life,
Not being able to see my family
Not being able to breathe the cool beach breeze,
Not sharing the love that I so much need,
Dam I guess all this question will always be a mystery to
me
Well Beat GOODNIGHT.

SALADIN "DEAN" MINOR II

Here's another short and sweet poem about love. He's writing from Provo, Utah. Well, what can we say, this poem speaks for itself. Thanks for thinking of us Dean!

What's Love

What's love
Love is devotion
It motions like the ocean
Nobody can question
This feeling of affection
To love is to cherish
Through dating and
Through marriage
So don't get careless
Find you someone to cherish

A Life Together

You've opened my eyes
 To love of highs
 And the beauty within
 If I could begin again
 I would nurture your spirit
 Wild and free
 I want to be near it
 If it could be
 That I could return
 My heart does yearn for your presence
 Time away stressing
 If your love will ever be blessing my life
 My heart alone has grown fond of your memory
 I wonder if you remember me
 Love on the verge of taking flight
 Now separated by a dark night
 Out of sight feelings still grow
 And I know one thing
 The happiness to my heart
 The thought a start of a life together does bring

Writing from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, we bring you this first time writer for The Beat Within. He's an outstanding poet and is really good at creating inspiration for the rest of us. He also writes about a man, one of, if not the greatest rapper of all time — Tupac Shakur. In fact, for those of you who don't know this, the death of Tupac was The Beat Within's first issue. His life and his lyrics touched so many young people at the time that everyone started writing about what Tupac meant to them, giving the founder of this great publication many pieces to be published. We thank this next first time writer and we also thank Tupac, for without either of you this wouldn't be possible.

*Very few will make it
 This cycle, you need to break it
 If you get a second chance,
 don't forsake it*



Full Fledged

You have purpose, once you serve this time
 Don't go back to the streets, the crime
 There is hope, if drug dealing is all you know
 You better broaden your scope
 Bring this life into full view
 Very few will make it
 This cycle, you need to break it
 If you get a second chance, don't forsake it
 A lot of people get caught up doing wrong
 Is that really what you want to pass on
 To your seed, addiction, lust, greed, violence
 Rise above and give yourself a chance
 There is a way out of this mess
 Let go of self doubt and stress
 I must confess it's a hard test
 But you've gotta do your best
 This life gets hard
 You've gotta play the cards you're dealt
 If you ever felt you deserved better
 Be a full fledged go getter

Young Activist For Tupac

All the way up there lookin down
 The world was your stage
 The page dripped with rage
 And the struggles you've seen
 Yet still we learn what you mean
 Keep ya' head up, stayed positive
 Even through a life rough
 There's been enough bloodshed
 And lead spit, we will never forget
 How you blessed the mic
 Outlaw for life
 Brought to life issues that needed addressed
 A young M.C. blessed
 The world lost a soldier of the struggle of the righteous
 In memory I hold ya', young activist

*I want to give back to my community,
The one I took so much from;
Not living like a failure,
Turning to drugs to feel numb...
I want to know how it feels,
To sweat and have to sacrifice;
Not living as a coward,
Running from the responsibilities of life...
I want to see the days,
When my grandchildren run around*

read the rest of Andrew Lerose's BWO piece on page 54

